

**Liberalism, Republicanism, and
John Milton's Late Political Thought**

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Nathan L. Clark

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ABSTRACT

Many critics regard the late Milton as a republican, while others consider him a liberal. This is problematic, for prominent political historians argue that republican political thought is distinct from liberal political thought. How, then, can Milton be both a republican and a liberal? I have contributed to the answer of this question by examining Milton's late political thought in *A Treatise of Civil Power* (1659) and *The Ready and Easy Way* (second edition, April, 1660). John Locke may be legitimately regarded as having presented a definitive statement of liberal political thought. Thus, after presenting a comprehensive definition of liberalism, as it was formulated by Locke, we can see that Milton, in *Of Civil Power*, conforms with liberal political thought in a number of ways. Like Locke, Milton argues, on the one hand, that the state should not use force in matters of religion, but on the other hand argues that Catholics should not be tolerated by the state. Because Milton's political thought in *Of Civil Power* is the same in many important respects as Locke's political thought, there are strong grounds for thinking of Milton as a liberal in this tract. There are, however, no grounds for thinking of Milton as a republican in this tract.

By taking the arguments of Machiavelli as their model, Skinner and Pocock provide us with a comprehensive definition of republican political thought. Milton's political thought in *The Ready and Easy Way* is both consistent and inconsistent in a number of ways with both republican and liberal political thought. But this tract is more liberal than republican because the liberal notion that humans have a God-given natural freedom that government must protect is more prominent in this pamphlet than the republican notion that personal freedom is a privilege that must be earned. Like Locke, Milton also defends religious freedom and emphasises its importance, and he never expresses the republican notion of religion as a mere political tool. Moreover, like Locke, Milton expresses a Christian vision of history, which contrasts with Machiavelli's cyclical view of history. Overall, then, Milton is more of a liberal than a republican in *The Ready and Easy Way*.

1. INTRODUCTION

(i)

Much recent Milton scholarship has been devoted to understanding the relationship between John Milton's late political thought and the two major traditions of post-Renaissance English political thought, liberalism and republicanism. Some critics present Milton as a liberal, alleging that natural law theory is present in his work or that he is committed to equal rights. Others, however, have argued that Milton is a republican, since he is committed to the establishment of a republican government and the abolition of monarchy. I will now examine the arguments made by the authors in both of these groups, beginning with those who see the late Milton as a republican.

Some critics have recently argued that Satan's rebellion in *Paradise Lost* (1667) is evidence of Milton's criticism of monarchy and his support for republican government. Roger Lejosne, for example, argues that Satan's encounter with Abdiel in Book V is representative of the pamphlet wars between Milton and Salmasius. Satan's anti-monarchical republican sentiment reflects Milton's position in his debate with Salmasius, a staunch defender of the king's authority. In making Abdiel a kind of celestial Salmasius and Satan a hellish image of himself, Milton "made monarchy in Heaven justify republicanism on earth" (106). Lejosne makes the same point, arguing that Milton thought he could rely on his readers to realise that "if the sole truly legitimate king was 'the son of God,' then whatever Salmasius and the other royalists said of earthly kings was true of him, but only him. . . . In other words, Salmasius was right and Milton was wrong in Heaven, but only in Heaven. And *consequently* Milton and the republicans were right on earth, where no man could rightly claim divine honours" (117). Armand Himy also interprets *Paradise Lost* in this way:

Satan's views on the tyranny of God serve several purposes. The immediate one is to illustrate Satan's lies. Accommodation and indirection, accepted as methods of interpretation from the outset, can leave no doubt as to what Milton means: God is no tyrant. But the description of tyranny is necessary to show what should be avoided in politics. Human kingship cannot fail to lapse into tyranny. (120)

Himy concludes that in Milton's view "a commonwealth must be preferred to a monarchy" (121).

Stephen Zwicker also argues that *Paradise Lost* represents Milton's rejection of monarchy. He writes that Milton had been "deprived of office and place" by the Restoration, and claims that "*Paradise Lost* is Milton's polemical answer to [this] disenfranchisement and exile. It is a justification and idealization of his role in a political cause now defeated" ("Lines" 248). With reference to Book XI, Zwicker claims that the aim of Milton's narrative of history is "subtly and completely to associate all monarchies with one another" ("Lines" 255). This leads Zwicker to determine that "*Paradise Lost* is a countermeasure to the restoration of kingship," and that "the rejection of kingship is crucial to the poet's confrontation with Restoration monarchy" ("Lines" 249, 255). Although Zwicker does not explicitly state that Milton is a republican, he asserts that "Milton must be read as the greatest protagonist of the 'good old cause'", that is to say, English republicanism (Introduction, *Politics of Discourse* 2).

In "John Milton: Poet Against Empire," David Armitage also claims that Paradise Lost reflects Milton's republicanism. Armitage says that in *The Discourses*, Niccoló Machiavelli, a sixteenth-century Italian republican theorist, uses Rome as an example of how "an offensive posture towards the outside world . . . led directly to servitude for the Roman people (*The Discourses* III.24): the liberty which had been won with the expulsion of the Kings ended with the dictatorships of Sulla and Marius" (208-209). Machiavelli concludes that to achieve political longevity a new republic should be defensive and non-

expansionary. According to Armitage, Milton read *The Discourses* and accepted Machiavelli's reasoning. Thus, Cromwell's policy of imperial expansion "convinced Milton that Cromwell was the English Sulla who had fatally compromised the republic's fragile liberty" (214). Milton and the republicans feared that Cromwell's single person rule and costly expansionary designs would eventually lead to tyranny and the revival of kingship, as Machiavelli had warned. Armitage argues that Milton's criticism of Cromwell's policy of expansion is represented in *Paradise Lost* by Satan's colonisation of earth. Armitage writes, "though Satan had achieved his aim in the new world, the fruits of victory are at least as bitter as those of defeat, as Satan and his fellow-demons are all transformed into serpents in the moment of their triumph, 'the dire form / Caught by contagion, like in punishment / As in their crime' (*PL*, X, 543-5)" (219). Armitage suggests that here Milton is expressing criticism of Cromwell's imperial expansion. Satan, writes Armitage, is "a single person 'with monarchal pride / Conscious of highest worth' (*PL*, II, 428-9) embarking upon a risky enterprise in the new world. Cromwell, too, was a single person with quasi-monarchical powers, in the eyes of republicans" (219). Armitage suggests that Satan is conflated with Cromwell, and that this is further evidence of Milton's criticism of the Protectorate. This confirms to Armitage that "when Milton began work on *Paradise Lost*, in the last months of the Protectorate, his treatment of the problem of Empire would have been a timely reflection on the betrayal of the English republic by Cromwell, an English Sulla. When the poem was first published, in 1667, it retained its topicality as a retrospective republican reading of the failures of the 1650s" (223). Armitage suggests that Milton never faulted republicanism itself, but rather held Cromwell personally responsible for the republic's decline. Thus, Armitage concludes that "Milton remained true to his republicanism even in his anger and his regret" (225).

In *Writing the English Republic*, David Norbrook also presents the late Milton as a republican. He argues, for example, that *Paradise Lost* transmits Milton's republican principles. In challenging the assumption that "Milton's praise of God's kingship over Satan's rebellion . . . was a return to monarchist imagination" (433), Norbrook argues that "in giving a semi-republican rhetoric to Satan," Milton "demonstrates how republican ideals can become corrupted by personal ambition" (442). Norbrook claims that during the Satanic assembly in Book II, Milton's description reveals that "Satan has been praised" by the other fallen angels in a "monarchical way for a pre-eminently republican virtue" (454). This suggests to Norbrook that through Satan, Milton was presenting a criticism of Cromwell's single-person rule, where the common interest had become subordinate to a private will. However, Norbrook writes that "the most important point being made" by Milton is that Satan's use of the "language of public interest should not discredit the language itself, merely the context in which it becomes the vehicle for tyrannical speech-acts" (455). In other words, Norbrook argues that Milton uses Satan not to discredit republican rhetoric, but its misuse. Norbrook then suggests that republicanism is associated with Heaven in *Paradise Lost*, whereas monarchy becomes increasingly associated with Satan: "the fallen angels' ability to muster superb quasi-republican eloquence is a sign of their heavenly origins. The more time passes from his initial rebellion, the more monarchical Satan's language becomes" (455). Norbrook also argues that throughout *Paradise Lost*, a "link is made between monarchy and anarchy" (471). He argues that for Milton, "it was monarchy – including Protectoral monarchy – that was Babel-like, replacing a common language of public interests with the clashing, atomized languages of contending private interests" (469). An example of this is Milton's description of Chaos seated on the throne as an Anarch, "a brilliant coinage . . . [and] a back-formation from 'monarch' (ii.988)" (471). When Milton associates Chaos with political disorder, Norbrook

says it is to make an anti-monarchist point. These connections that Norbrook sees Milton making between Satan, anarchy, and monarchy on the one hand, and divinity and republicanism on the other, are also compatible with Norbrook's views on Milton's cosmology. He writes that "Milton's Chaos is not inherently evil," and that "Chaos is as it were the cosmos's [sic] default mode, transformable into concord only by a continued process of careful intervention" (472). Norbrook infers that "this cosmology is republican in the sense that it plays down any sense of monarchy as a natural order and strongly exercises the element of artifice in any polity" (473). Having made this point, Norbrook accommodates Milton's God into this cosmology by emphasising his republican credentials and downplaying his role as heavenly monarch:

Milton's God is not frightened by the risk of apparent imbalance; he knows that this can be turned into a more complicated and vital kind of balance. . . . In political terms, God's role is that of a dynamic, Machiavellian legislator. He is open to conflict and discord and does not claim to achieve concord by enforcing sterility. While he enjoys the panoply of kingship, he is ready to undergo sacrifice for the general good. God's creation of the Son epitomizes the principle of divine reduction. (472, 474)

According to Norbrook, then, Milton associates republicanism with God and Heaven, and monarchy with Satan and anarchy. He concludes that although *Paradise Lost* was published during the Restoration, "it could still transmit to future generations the republican principles that were waiting in their Chaos" (491).

Besides *Paradise Lost*, Milton's prose works are cited by critics as evidence of his republicanism. For example, Austin Woolrych writes that in Milton's *The Ready and Easy Way* (1660), the "condemnation of monarchy is absolute," and "its general celebration of republican liberty and virtue in contrast with monarchical tyranny and servitude stands for certain above the limitations of time and place" (216, 214). Similarly, Z.S. Fink writes that one may conclude from *The Ready and Easy Way*, "that Milton's experiences with Charles I

did more than make him reject kingship, . . . they made him reject all single-person magistrates whatsoever" (104). More recent Milton scholarship has concurred with these interpretations. Blair Worden, for instance, has stated that in 1659-60, Milton unambiguously renounced monarchy of all kinds ("Milton and Marchamont" 166). Martin Hollis writes that *The Ready and Easy Way* "denounces monarchy in all its forms and . . . breathes republican fire" (66). Also with reference to *The Ready and Easy Way*, Norbrook writes that "Milton both practises and preaches a commitment to the power and value of republican language," and that "Milton sees kingship as a form of blasphemy" (412, 414). This interpretation is supported by Cedric C. Brown, who writes, with reference to *The Ready and Easy Way*, that

having established its government, Israel had become, in Milton's words, 'a Commonwealth of God's own ordaining, he only thir king, they his peculiar people,' and Moses' [sic] asking for help and leading the people was clearly a good thing; whereas the desire of subsequent generations of Israelites to have a king is seen as a falling off from that standard of government by senate which God had manifestly approved. (50)

The main issue, argues Brown, "concerns civic freedom and the avoidance of tyranny which . . . [Milton] thinks inevitably comes with monarchical rule" (52). Brown supports this argument by commenting on the changes made by Milton in the second edition of *The Ready and Easy Way*. He writes that although Milton "is more circumspect in his definition of the powers of the grand council, . . . he sticks to his perpetual senate of aristocratic virtue, and it emerges that replacements will be elected only by a process of refinement, keeping choice from the popular voice [for monarchical rule]. Spirits are to save the people from themselves and compel them to liberty" (54). Brown concludes that the "new passages reinforce the sense of moral difference between republicanism and kingly rule" (54). Finally, Quentin Skinner also positions Milton within the republican tradition:

I have said that the classical republicans were mainly concerned to celebrate . . . 'the excellency of a free state'. . . . Like a free person, a free state is one that is able to act according to its own will. . . . A free state, they argue, must constitutionally speaking be what Livy and Sallust and Cicero had all described and celebrated as a *res publica*. . . . Most of the writers I have cited . . . generally conclude that, if we wish to set up a *res publica*, it will be best to set up a republic as opposed to any kind of principality or monarchical rule. The central contention of the theory I am examining is thus that a self-governing republic is the only type of regime under which a community can hope to attain greatness at the same time as guaranteeing its citizens their individual liberty. This is Machiavelli's usual view, Harrington's consistent view, and the view that Milton eventually came to accept [by the time he wrote *The Ready and Easy Way*]. ("Republican Ideal" 301-303)

Like many of the critics mentioned, Skinner here suggests that the late Milton is a republican in the sense of repudiating monarchy and asserting republican forms of government.

In "Milton and the Characteristics Of A Free Commonwealth," Thomas N. Corns offers a more qualified argument for presenting Milton as a republican. Corns observes that in many of Milton's prose works, Milton neither condemns monarchy nor praises republican government. In *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (1649), for instance, Milton "praises good kingship and distinguishes it from the regime of Charles I" (31). The issue in this tract, writes Corns, "is the response appropriate not to monarchs but to tyrants" (30). Similarly, Corns observes that in *Eikonoklastes* (1649), "kingship as such is not the issue: this king and his punishment are" (32). Corns also examines *A Defence of the People of England* (1651), and concludes that here Milton "is defending the rights of a particular people at a particular time to deal with the particular king, rather than with the merits of republicanism. Indeed, he once more explores the distinction between good kings and tyrants, and declines to follow the republican argument to the exclusion of the former" (33). However, having qualified his argument with these observations, Corns argues that "the

republicanism, in Milton's writing, is more an attitude of mind than a particular governmental configuration" (41). Corns refers to *The Ready and Easy Way* as Milton's "last major republican pamphlet," and writes that it "offers an image, rendered retrospectively poignant, of an English free commonwealth founded on the service of the godly . . . [and] it produces a rational and unmystical state . . . 'where no single person, but reason only swaies' (revised edition, *CPW*, VII, 427)" (41). Corns argues that Milton's presentation of kingship, on the other hand, "requires the surrender of self-respect . . . [and] brings the unacceptable and displaced aesthetic of the court, its assertion of the divine status of the king and his family, together with the gaudy corruptions of cavalier culture" (41). Corns also refers to Milton's conclusion in *The Ready and Easy Way* where Milton asserts, "What I have spoken, is the language of that which is not call'd amiss the good Old Cause" (898). The phrase, "the good Old Cause," Corn claims, "is appropriate for, in a sense, that cause, the cause of English republicanism. . . . It is an idiom in which the value system and an aesthetic are inscribed, and it is an undeferential [sic] posture which utterly subverts the assumptions of Stuart monarchism" (42). Corns concludes that "Milton's prose articulates something . . . [hard] to control, that republican consciousness, founded in a sense of political self-worth and a powerful suspicion of the mystery of kingship" (42). Thus, although Corns offers a somewhat more qualified argument than many of his contemporaries, he nevertheless joins those critics who present Milton as republican.

(ii)

In contrast to those who present Milton as a republican, John Rogers argues that Milton's *Paradise Lost* articulates liberal political theory. In *The Matter of Revolution: Science, Poetry, and Politics in the Age of Milton*, Rogers connects Milton to the philosophy of Vitalism, which sought to secure "into the fabric of the physical world a general scheme of individual agency and decentralised organisation that we can identify as protoliberalism" (12). It is important to recognise here that Rogers only offers a very vague and therefore weak definition of liberal political theory on which to base his judgement of Milton's political philosophy in *Paradise Lost*. According to Rogers, the cornerstone of Milton's theodicy is reflected in the belief that God initially infused his divine goodness into matter, and that thereafter matter can safely be trusted to govern itself. Thus, Rogers explains that in *Paradise Lost*, "the process by which 'order from disorder sprung' (3.713) was set in motion by an unrepeatable originary [sic] act that empowered the world's material mould to alter itself; once the abyss has been impregnated with the self-activating *divina virtus*, the effective control over generation evolves on the now self-generating matter of chaos" (114). To demonstrate his point, Rogers uses Raphael's description of the earth's formation:

The Earth was form'd, but in the Womb as yet
Of Waters, Embryon immature involv'd,
Appear'd not: over all the face of Earth
Main Ocean flow'd, not idle, but with warm
Prolific humor soft'ning all her Globe,
Fermented the great Mother to conceive,
Sate with genial moisture, when God said,
Be gather'd now ye Waters under Heav'n
Into one place, and let dry Land appear. (7. 276-84)

Although he admits that "in the final lines of this passage, Milton dutifully reproduces God's commandment in Genesis," Rogers nevertheless asserts that "nowhere does Milton more dramatically wrest from God his creative agency" (115, 114). Rogers explains that this passage describes "the moment at which the earth gave birth to itself" (115). This idea of autonomous material generation has powerful political ramifications. Once infused with divine goodness and power, all matter can govern itself according to the intrinsic laws of nature.

Rogers therefore argues that natural law philosophy is present throughout Milton's *Paradise Lost*. He observes that not even God, in *Paradise Lost*, is above the law of nature. After Adam and Eve sin, "the Father accepts the Son's sacrifice and promises that man will indeed be saved; but the Father then qualifies his offer of redemption with the following condition" (147):

But longer in that Paradise to dwell,
The Law I gave to Nature him forbids:
Those pure immortal Elements that know
No gross, no unharmonious mixture foul,
Eject him tainted now, and purge him off
As a distemper, gross to air as gross,
And mortal food, as may dispose him best
For dissolution wrought by Sin, that first
Distemper'd all things, and of incorrupt
Corrupted. (11.48-57)

"In explaining to the Son the limitations of his mercy . . . the Father describes what will be the necessary expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden" (148). Rogers explains that although the Father leads us to understand that he would like to pardon fully the sinful pair, "the laws of nature established at the Creation prohibited man's further habitation in the garden. . . . He justifies what might otherwise appear to be a callous lack of mercy by an appeal to an even higher principle of irrevocable natural law" (148). The expulsion is

represented by the Father "as a lamentable reaction of the material body of Paradise to the newly corrupted bodies of Adam and Eve. . . . By reason of the vital spirit infused at the Creation into the original matter, material processes exercise their own highly moral form of justice as they follow inexorably the laws of nature the Father has established" (148-149).

However, when the Father announces his intentions to the entire heavenly community, an entirely new rationale for the deportation of Adam and Eve is presented:

Lest therefore his now bolder hand
Reach also of the Tree of Life, and eat,
And live for ever, dream at least to live
For ever, to remove him I decree,
And send him from the Garden forth to Till
The Ground whence he was taken, fitter soil. (11.93-98)

It now appears as though the Father had played an active role in the pair's punishment: "Milton's Father emerges as the stern lawgiver, actively intervening to execute punishment" (152). After "the poem's first, naturalistic explanation of the expulsion" resulting from "an absolute but impersonal natural justice," Rogers argues that "the remainder of the epic focuses on the retributive justice of an anthropomorphised deity" (151). Moreover, although Michael initially attributes tyrannical rule to sinful human desire, as his explanation continues "he quickly lifts his attribution of cause from this human, psychological plane to the supernal stratum of the anger of a vengeful God" (162):

Therefore since hee permits
Within himself unworthy Powers to reign
Over free Reason, God in Judgement just
Subjects him from without to violent Lords. (12.90-93)

Thus, "Michael himself envisions history as a form of God's retributive justice" (160). However, Rogers argues that Michael's "relentless delineation of an authoritarian

philosophy of organisation" does not quite overwhelm "the poem's attempt to engender a discourse of liberal individualism" (161). He describes the disciplinary process, whereby God punishes those who transgress Mosaic law, as "one of systemic liberalisation" (170). He explains that

it is intended to move man, considered both phylogenetically and ontogenetically, 'From imposition of strict Laws, to free / Acceptance of large Grace' (12.304-5), a movement away from divine intervention and toward a world of human choice and voluntary acceptance of help from above. . . . Insofar as Michael is functioning as a Mosaic lawgiver to Adam, his description of the law as 'imperfect' or incomplete announces the planned obsolescence of his own historical discourse. The Mosaic law exists to be abrogated. (170)

Throughout history, God has judged and punished those who have not obeyed his commands so that as free agents humans will learn to depend on the regularity of natural law. Rogers claims that this interpretation is supported by the poem's representation of the actual expulsion:

The Cherubim descended; on the ground
 Gliding meteorous, as Ev'ning Mist
 Ris'n from a River o'er the Marish glides
 And gathers ground fast at the Labourer's heel,
 Homeward returning. (12.628-32)

The image of the mist in this passage, that "gathers ground fast at the Labourer's heel," suggests to Rogers that it is "this mist itself that dogs the labourer's step and pushes him to his appointed end. In making this force a vaporous propulsion . . . Milton surrounds this prod at the labourer's heel with an interpretive [sic] penumbra that leaves indeterminate the controlling cause of human action" (172-173). Rogers concludes that "the image of the mist reasserts the vitalist world of ordinary providence, the animistic cosmos in which God exerts his control over man not with arbitrary judgements but more simply by placing him among those pre-established natural laws that foster liberal justice" (173-174). In

accordance with his weak definition of liberalism, Rogers suggests that Milton is an advocate of liberal political theory because the presence of natural law theory is observed by Rogers in *Paradise Lost*.

In her book, *Early Modern Liberalism*, Annabel Patterson also positions Milton firmly within the tradition of liberal political philosophy. Like Rogers, however, she offers a vague, one-line definition of liberalism. She defines it as the "political thoughts that follow from the claim that all human beings are naturally equal, and have therefore equal rights," and she identifies "John Milton as an example of an early modern liberal" (1, 63). Because of Milton's promotion of the freedom of the press in *Areopagitica* (1644), Patterson writes that it is "Milton's most inarguably liberal pamphlet" (9) and "became a canonical text of modern liberalism" (64). In *Of Education* (1644), Milton asserts the need of young commonwealthmen to acquire a liberal education, which "in 1644 could be designed only in a free society, politically speaking" (62). Patterson argues that in order to secure such a society, in his *Second Defence of the English People* (May, 1654), Milton advised Cromwell to incorporate into his regime aspects of liberal political thought. For example, she writes that Milton declared to Cromwell "that the new regime should 'leave the church to the Church;' that is to say, initiate that legal and financial separation of church and state on which John Locke put so much seemingly inventive emphasis" (63). Moreover, she writes that Milton also asserts the needs "of education and freedom of speech" in this pamphlet (63). When Patterson examines Milton's argument in *The Ready and Easy Way* (1660), she acknowledges its "inconsistencies and eruptions of bias," but nevertheless argues that it represents early modern liberal political thought. She states that "if one wants to see how early modern liberalism was conceived by one of its pioneers (at one of the most inventive because desperate stages of his thinking), one can hardly do better than turn to the final pages of Milton's appeal, in the spring of 1660, to the English

nation to remain a republic of sorts, by refusing to accept the house of Stuart back at the head of their government" (24, 5). She points out that the proposals made by Milton in this pamphlet, to preserve the ideals of the revolution, are centred around his desire for liberty of conscience and the protection of civil rights.

Although Patterson briefly attends to some of Milton's political prose, her argument centres on Milton's sonnets, which she sees "as a key, once almost lost or at least pocketed, to Milton's understanding of himself as an early modern liberal" (67). She states that "the story that Milton made his sonnets tell was indeed that of the 'ongoing fight against barbarity,' but we learn of the defeats in that campaign as much or more than the victories" (70). The sonnets in Milton's personal 'Cambridge' manuscript "all carried at some stage in his thinking manuscript titles that stated or implied a precise dating" (72). The manuscript titles reveal that sonnet 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16 were all written between 1642 and 1652, during the Civil War and interregnum. Yet when these sonnets were published during the Restoration in 1673, Milton had removed their temporal markers of historic specificity so that the overt signs of his political life as an opponent of the tyranny of Charles I were removed. Patterson suggests that Milton's sonnets supported liberal political action against the barbarity of Charles I, but Milton knew that it was necessary to disguise this aspect of his sonnets when he published them during the reign of Charles II. According to Patterson, this evidence confirms Milton's understanding of himself as an early modern liberal. For Patterson, Milton's wanting to hide his revolutionary past (like everyone else), is evidence of his liberalism. She concludes, therefore, that "the advantages of designating Milton an early modern liberal are many. Not least among them is the opportunity it gives for reducing the disagreements among Milton's readers, and even for expanding their number" (65). Furthermore, she states that "a liberal Milton can own more his own works" (65):

the right to express one's opinions in public is asserted implicitly in every one of his tracts merely by their appearance; but Milton also explored that right explicitly in several of his sonnets. The right to practise the religion of one's choice (though the right to practise none would have been inconceivable to him) drives *Lycidas* and the sonnet on the Piedmont massacre as much as it informs the prospectus of church history at the end of *Paradise Lost*. And as for the right to education and information, there are few writers who have so consistently demonstrated the belief in its importance. (66)

Clearly, Patterson believes that Milton is best presented as an early modern liberal.

(iii)

Some critics, then, identify Milton as a republican, and others consider him a liberal, but a problem arises when we take into account the findings of prominent political historians who reveal that republican political thought is distinct from liberal political thought. In "The Republican Ideal of Political Liberty," Quentin Skinner, for example, investigates republicanism with particular emphasis on the works of Machiavelli. According to Skinner, republicans such as Machiavelli believed that the establishment of a free state could produce civic greatness and wealth and that only free states are capable of bequeathing personal liberty to its citizens. In order to establish a free state, the republicans generally conclude that "it will be best to set up a republic" (303). However, a self-governing republic can only be maintained "if its citizens cultivate that crucial quality which Cicero had described as *virtus*" (303). Skinner explains that this term is "used to denote the range of capacities that each one of us as a citizen most needs to possess: the capacities that enable us willingly to serve the common good, thereby to uphold the freedom of the community, and in consequence to ensure its rise to greatness as well as our own individual liberty" (303). It is therefore in the best interest of the citizen to act

virtuously because by doing so he serves the state and works to secure his own personal liberty. Although it is in the citizen's best interest to serve his state, Skinner says that Machiavelli and other republican writers depended upon the law to coerce citizens into acting virtuously and fulfilling their civic duties. It is at this point in his argument that Skinner examines the differences between republican theory and liberal political theory. He states that for theorists such as Machiavelli, "the law preserves our liberty not merely by coercing others, but also by directly coercing each one of us into acting in a particular way. The law is also used, that is, to force us out of the habitual patterns of self-interested behaviour, to force us into discharging the full range of our civic duties, and thereby to ensure that the free state on which our own liberty depends is itself maintained free of servitude" (305). By contrast, for theorists like Locke who belong to a tradition of liberal political thought,

our freedom is a natural possession, a property of ourselves. The law's claim to limit its exercise can only be justified if it can be shown that, were the law to be withdrawn, the effect would not in fact be a greater liberty, but rather a diminution of the security with which our existing liberty is enjoyed. For a writer like Machiavelli, however, the justification of law is nothing to do with the protection of individual rights, a concept that makes no appearance in the *The Discourse* at all. (305)

Skinner reaches the conclusion that republican writers "not only connect social freedom with self-government, but also link the idea of personal liberty with that of virtuous public service," a theory which "contrasts sharply with modern liberal individualism" (306).

This view is supported by J. G. A. Pocock in his book *Virtue, Commerce, and History*. In the essay, "Virtues, Rights, and Manners," he recognises crucial differences between liberal juridical and classical republican political thought. He begins with the observation that although classical works on the history of political thought are "organized to a very high degree around notions of God, nature, and law," there are thinkers such as

"Machiavelli, [who] bear no relation to the natural law paradigm" and are therefore "presumed to have been negating or subverting it. Changes in the dominant styles of political thought are brought within the paradigm and treated as evidence of its destruction from without or its exhaustion from without, little attention being paid to the possibility that perhaps they did not belong with it in the first place" (37-38). Pocock writes that

recently, however – and in pursuit of a now prevalent technique of discovering and recapitulating the vocabularies and idioms in which political thought has been articulated in the course of its history – there have arisen presentations of that history in which the natural-law paradigm occupies only part of the stage, and we learn to speak in idioms not reducible to the conjoined languages of philosophy and jurisprudence. . . . The central occurrence in this recent historiography has been the crucial role accorded to what is variously termed civic humanism or classical republicanism. (38)

According to Pocock, this vocabulary of classical republicanism is "outstandingly discontinuous" with that of juristic discourse (39). He writes that "Francisco Guicciardini, for example, was a doctor of civil law and had practised as such; yet in his writings the language of republican virtue is regularly if self-destructively employed, while the language of jurisprudence hardly ever appears, least of all as a tool of normative political theory. Something very similar may be said of Machiavelli" (39). Pocock explains that according to republican political theory, humans are constituted in such a way that they are only "completed" when they participate in political life for the public good (40). In devoting himself in this way to the public good, the citizen is said to embody "virtue." The level of authority a particular citizen has in his society will depend upon how virtuous he is by nature. Thus, writes Pocock, although "nature may be developed," it "cannot be distributed" (43). He concludes that "virtue cannot therefore be reduced to matter of right" (43). Under republican political theory, then, a citizen's political participation and authority are not a given natural right, but are dependent upon his ability to be virtuous. Juridical

liberal discourse, on the other hand, "distinguished between *libertas* and *imperium*, freedom and authority, individuality and sovereignty, private and public. This is its greatest role in the history of political thought, and it performs this role by associating liberty with right"

(40). Pocock explains that under this liberal political theory,

the civil and common law define individuals as possessors by investing them with right and property in things, and ultimately (as with Locke) in themselves. . . . The classical history of what we have come to term liberalism, [is] the story of how rights became the precondition, the occasion, and the effective cause of sovereignty, so that sovereignty appeared to be the creature of the rights it existed to protect.

(45)

Unlike republican political thought, "the liberal synthesis . . . defined the individual as right-bearer and proprietor, it did not define him as possessing a personality adequate to participation in self-rule" (45). Pocock concludes "that alongside the history of liberalism, which is a matter of law and right, there existed throughout the early modern period a history of republican humanism, in which personality was considered in terms of virtue" (45). Thus, like Skinner, Pocock emphasises the distinction between liberalism and republicanism.

This distinction is also made clear by Gordon J. Schochet, who writes that in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England, "the discourse of virtue, which was part of republican theory, stood alongside a legalistic discourse of individual rights and liberties" (328). During the seventeenth century, legalistic and rights terminology began to compete with humanist rhetoric and, by the end of the eighteenth century, it became the more dominant discourse: "for the most part, after the French and American revolutions, the vocabularies of virtue and corruption and of civility and politeness were to play diminished roles in politics" (331). By 1800, "the principal terms of twentieth-century English-language politics were in place" and, although "the meaning of these terms has shifted somewhat over the intervening 200 years," they "comprised the more-or-less coherent body

of doctrine that would come to be known as 'liberalism'" (333). Schochet points out that the triumph of liberalism has coincided with the defeat of republicanism:

The legal construct 'state' eventually replaced the more humanistic 'commonwealth,' and its members were 'citizens' in the modern sense whose 'rights,' 'interest,' 'properties,' and 'liberties' were the reasons for political action as well as limitations on public 'authority.' The point of politics was to protect and enhance rights and liberties – which were now conceived as *entitlements* that preceded organised politics and government rather than as *privileges* which were their creations – and not to pursue civic virtue. (333)

Like Skinner and Pocock, then, Schochet points to fundamental differences between liberal and republican political thought.

(iv)

Given that republican political theory is fundamentally distinct from liberal political theory, as Skinner, Pocock, and Schochet point out, the question must be asked: how can Milton be both a liberal and a republican? In this thesis, I propose to contribute to the answer to this question by considering Milton's *A Treatise Of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes* (1659) and *The Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth* (second edition, April, 1660). In Chapter Two, a comprehensive study of liberalism will be presented with reference to John Locke's late political thought, so that an accurate comparison can be made between liberal political thought and Milton's political thought in *Of Civil Power*. Like Locke, Milton promotes religious toleration and the separation of church and state. Moreover, he asserts that the state can legitimately use force in civil matters and that the church can legitimately use persuasion in religious matters. The investigation of liberalism will then be refined and extended, based on William Walker's finding that Locke's theory of religious toleration is limited. Milton's theory of religious

toleration is also limited, and he ends up asserting, like Locke, that Catholics should not be tolerated by the state. There are, therefore, strong grounds for thinking of Milton as a liberal in *Of Civil Power*. But there are no grounds for thinking of Milton as a republican in this treatise.

In Chapter Three, *The Ready and Easy Way* will be examined in relation to republican and liberal political thought. A comprehensive study of republicanism will be presented, based on the work of both Pocock and Skinner. Milton's political thought in this tract conforms with republicanism in a number of ways: he argues that republican government will bring civic greatness and will promote liberty; he at times emphasises the importance of serving the state; he suggests that citizens will need to cultivate the virtues in order to construct and maintain republican government; and he criticises monarchy. However, Milton's republicanism in *The Ready and Easy Way* is qualified in several ways: first, because the reasons Milton expresses for opposing monarchy are often different from those cited by Machiavelli, and second, because Milton's repudiation of monarchy is by no means absolute (at one point in the text he applauds monarchy where Christ is king, and in other places he admits that monarchy is not necessarily a bad form of government). Thus, these factors qualify the sense in which Milton is a republican in *The Ready and Easy Way*.

Next, Milton's political thought in *The Ready and Easy Way* will be compared with Lockean liberalism. In parts of this tract, Milton asserts, like Locke, that man was created free, man is naturally free, and that government should protect Man's freedom. Moreover, he suggests that government base its laws on the laws of nature. For Milton, as for Locke, one of these laws of nature is that all humans remain free. Milton's priorities are also consistent with liberal political thought because, like Locke, he defends religious toleration and argues that there is nothing more important than religious freedom. Milton's political thought also conforms with liberalism, in the sense that he suggests that rebellion is

justified if government violates the people's liberties, he expresses a Christian view of history, and he asserts that government originates in the consent of the people. However, Milton also diverges from Lockean liberalism in a number of important ways. Unlike Locke, Milton criticises the rule of the majority and presents a very narrow definition of "the people" who can choose the form and composition of England's government at this time.

Milton's political thought in *The Ready and Easy Way* is thus both consistent and inconsistent in a number of ways with both republican and liberal political thought. But this tract is more liberal than republican because the liberal notion that humans have a God-given natural freedom that government must protect, is more prominent in this pamphlet than the republican notion that personal freedom is a privilege that must be earned. Like Locke, Milton also defends religious freedom and emphasises its importance, and he never expresses the republican notion of religion as a mere political tool. Moreover, in accordance with his Protestantism, Milton also expresses a linear Christian view of history, which contrasts with Machiavelli's cyclical view of history. Overall, then, Milton is more of a liberal than a republican in *The Ready and Easy Way*.

2. THE CHURCH, THE STATE , AND TOLERATION:

MILTON'S *OF CIVIL POWER*

(i)

Although we do not know exactly when *Of Civil Power* was published, Austin Woolrych informs us that Milton "registered it for publication with the Stationers' Company on February 16, 1659" (46). Up to and during this time England experienced political instability. Between 1642 and 1649, civil war had plagued the country, with those loyal to King Charles I fighting those who believed him to be a tyrant and a traitor with Catholic connections. The war ended with the public trial and execution of Charles and the abolition of monarchy and the House of Lords. After a period of parliamentary rule, in 1653 the army, unhappy with the Rump Parliament's failure to institute the religious reforms that would allow for liberty of conscience, forced the dissolution of the Rump Parliament and in its place established the Protectorate under Oliver Cromwell. After the death of Oliver Cromwell in 1658, his son Richard was made Protector, and on January 27, 1659 he summoned a new Parliament.

Milton's *Of Civil Power* is addressed to this Parliament: "I have prepared, supreme Council, against the much expected time of your sitting, this Treatise" (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 839). In his introduction, Milton recommends that the members of this Parliament only concern themselves with civil matters and that they leave ecclesiastical matters to the church: "the civil only to your proper care, ecclesiastical to them only from who it takes both that name and nature" (839). Milton asks them "to regard other men's consciences, as you would your own [if] . . . in the power of others" (839). Thus, the argument in *Of Civil Power* is designed to convince Parliament not to use force in matters

of religion. This argument is intimately tied to the fact that, as Arthur Barker writes, "the course of events had convinced him that no peaceful settlement could be achieved until the ecclesiastical and the political were rigorously separated" (224). There are, however, several problems with Milton's argument, problems that render his theory of religious toleration extremely narrow in scope. Once we have completed a comprehensive study of what constitutes "liberalism," we can see that this theory of limited religious toleration aligns Milton in many important respects with liberal political thought.

(ii)

Though John Locke participates in the longer tradition of juridical thought, and though, as Richard Ashcraft has shown, he is also a Whig ideologist, Locke may still legitimately be regarded as having presented a definitive statement of liberal political thought.¹ First, it is important to understand that Locke's political theory is founded on his religious beliefs.² As Locke says in *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (1685), "the taking

¹ Ashcraft writes that "Locke's thought expresses the tension within liberalism as a social theory between its universalistic claims to moral and religious equality — liberty, equality and fraternity — and its instrumentalist treatment of human beings as part of the process of capital accumulation The bifurcation between the radical assertions of moral worth and the indifference to the socio-economic suffering of the individual that characterizes Locke's political thought reappears as a constant tension within the political theories of liberals since the seventeenth century. The distribution of emphasis between these two dimensions, the specific concerns of the theorist and his ordering of value preferences and methodological assumptions, and the empirical social problems to which the political theory is addressed vary from one liberal thinker to another, but there is, I believe, a radical-conservative dichotomy at the heart of liberal political theory. In supplying the first comprehensive statement of this social, economic and political perspective, Locke may truly be said to be the father of liberalism" (*Locke's Two Treatises of Government* 265).

² Some critics suggest that Locke's liberalism is purely secular in origin. For example, Stephen Zwicker claims that there was a "disengagement of politics from religion" over the course of the seventeenth century and, as an example, he says that "Locke composed the second Exclusion Crisis Treatise in a language . . . wholly devoid of religious rhetoric" (*Lines of Authority* 234). Similarly, C. B. MacPherson separates Locke's political thought from religion, claiming that Locke sought to erase "the moral disability with which unlimited capitalist appropriation had hitherto been handicapped" (221). However, these interpretations have been challenged by John Dunn, Richard Ashcraft, and Quentin Skinner. In arguing against MacPherson, Dunn connects Locke's political theory to the Protestant doctrine of the calling, and writes that "the liberties which he struggles to vindicate are not the socially unavailable and in his eyes morally perilous liberties of unrestricted physical indulgence, but those freedoms which are necessary for executing the responsibilities of

away of God, though but even in thought, dissolves all" (*John Locke: Political Writings* 426). This is in part due to the fact that the law of nature, to which humanity is accountable, is the manifestation of God's will. In his major political work, *Two Treatises of Government* (1690), Locke claims that this law of nature dictates that all humans are obligated to preserve themselves and, as much as possible, everyone else, and that all humans are equal and have the rights to live and be free. In refuting Robert Filmer's claim, that the king's absolute authority is a divine right passed on through Adam's heirs, Locke first makes the point that God did not give the world just to Adam, but rather to all men: "'tis very clear that God, as King David says (Psalm 115.16), 'has given the earth to the children of men,' given it to mankind in common" (*John Locke: Political Writings* 273). Next, Locke argues that because all men are equal as God's workmanship and are His property, no one has the right to destroy himself or anyone else:

For men being all the workmanship of one omnipotent and infinitely wise maker, all the servants of one sovereign master, sent into the world by his order and about his business, they are his property whose workmanship they are, made to last during his, not one another's, pleasure. And being furnished with like faculties, sharing all in one community of nature, there cannot be supposed any such subordination among us that may authorize us to destroy one another. . . . Everyone, as he is bound to preserve himself, and not to quit his station wilfully, so by the like reason . . . ought he, as much as he can, to preserve the rest of mankind. (264).

According to Locke, the world belongs to all mankind "in common," not just to Adam and his heirs, and all humans are God's servants and God's property. As such, humans are obligated to preserve themselves and, as much as they can, everyone else. Ashcraft

the calling" (245). Dunn rightly concludes that "the secular 'Lockean' liberals of the contemporary United States are more intimately than they realise the heirs of the egalitarian promise of Calvinism" (250). The connection between religion and Locke's political thought is also observed by Ashcraft, who writes that "the architectonic importance of theology . . . is a constant feature of Locke's thought. . . . The nature and role of God are essential to an understanding of his social and political ideas" (*Locke's Two Treatises of Government* 35, 36). Similarly, Skinner also recognises this aspect of Lockean liberalism and writes, "John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* [is] the classic text of radical Calvinist politics" (*The Foundations of Modern*

explains, in *Locke's Two Treatises of Government*, that "Locke is attempting to show . . . that there is a moral standard that God has given to individuals in their natural condition prohibiting them from taking *any action* that would harm another individual" (101). Locke concludes that all humans "by nature are equal" (287), all humans have the "right of self-preservation" (266), and the "natural liberty of man is to be free from any superior power on earth" (272).

Locke also asserts that natural law dictates that all humans have the natural right to own assets. He argues that although God gave the world to all mankind, He also made man with "a strong desire for self-preservation" and instructed him to labour. To make this point, Locke frequently refers to chapter three of Genesis. For example, he quotes verse 19 and comments that Adam is told by God that "as long as thou livest, shalt thou live by thy labour" (243). Locke informs his readers "that these words are not spoken personally to Adam, but in him, as a representative, to all mankind, this being a curse upon mankind, because of the fall" (243). Nevertheless, Locke argues that by using his God-given ability to reason, man can determine that the work an individual puts into the production of a piece of land to nourish himself, makes this land his property: "His labour hath taken it out of the hands of nature, where it was common, and belonged equally to all her children, and hath thereby appropriated it to himself" (275). Therefore, as well as having the right to live and be free, Locke also asserts that every person has the right to own assets.

According to Locke, then, God's will has provided mankind with a natural law by which individuals have the natural rights to life, liberty, and assets. Locke writes that if, in the state of nature, this natural law is violated, "the innocent party has the right to destroy the other whenever he can until the aggressor offers peace and desires reconciliation on such terms as may repair any wrongs he has already done, and secure the innocent for the

Political Thought 239). As I will show, recognising this link with religion is crucial to understanding Locke's political thought, and its relationship with Milton's Protestant political thought.

future" (271). Furthermore, Locke argues that when such a violation occurs in the state of nature, it is an offence against all mankind and therefore "everyone has a right to punish the transgressors of that law to such a degree as may hinder its violation" (264). If the offender has committed murder then every man in the state of nature is authorised to kill him. However, a lesser breach of the law of nature should only be punished "to the degree that, and with so much severity, as will suffice to make it an ill bargain to the offender, give him cause to repent, and terrify others from doing the like" (267). Thus, everyone in the state of nature also has this right to punish transgressors of the law of nature.

Government is established to remedy the problems for man in the state of nature and protect the individual's property rights. The problem of man in the state of nature, writes Locke, is that "everyone has the executive power of the law of nature," (267) and therefore the punishment of a breach of this law will be biased. Where man lives in the state of nature, there is no impartial judge available on earth to determine the appropriate sentence of a breach of natural law. Locke explains that "it is unreasonable for men to be the judges in their own cases, that self-love will make men partial to themselves and their friends. And, on the other side, that ill-nature, passion, and revenge will carry them too far in punishing others" (267). Even if there was an impartial judge, there would still be no authority available with the power to execute the appropriate sentence to someone who breaks natural law. This is why Locke says that the state of man in nature is very insecure. Though man in the state of nature has equal natural rights, Locke explains that the enjoyment of these rights is limited by the constant exposure to the invasion of others: "For all being kings as much as he, every man his equal, and the greater part no strict observers of equality and justice, the enjoyment of the property he has in the state of nature is very unsafe" (324). Locke concludes that these problems of man in the state of nature cause

"nothing but confusion and disorder" (267). Because the state of nature "is full of fears and continual dangers," Locke writes that men are "willing to quit this condition" and

join in society with others who are already united, or have of mind to unite, for the mutual preservation of their lives, liberties, and estates, which I call by the general name *property*. The great and chief end, therefore, of men's uniting into commonwealths, and putting themselves under government, is the preservation of their property. (324-325)

Essentially, then, the purpose of government, according to Locke, is to protect the individual's natural property rights.

However, Locke argues that by leaving the state of nature and entering into political society, men surrender some of their natural rights to government. Locke explains that no political society can exist unless it has the power to preserve property, and to accomplish this it must have the power to punish those who violate its established rules. But to make sure punishment is executed without bias, "all private judgement of every particular member" of the political society must be "excluded" (304). Locke writes that instead of private judgement,

the community comes to be umpire, by settled standing rules, indifferent and the same to all parties; and, by men having authority from the community for the execution of those rules, decides all the differences that may happen between any members of that society concerning any matter of right; and punishes those offences which any member hath committed against the society with such penalties as the law has established. (304)

Locke concludes, therefore, that by leaving the state of nature and entering into political society, the individual relinquishes two of his natural rights. First, the power "of doing whatsoever he thought fit for the preservation of himself, and the rest of mankind, he gives up to be regulated by laws made by the society, so far forth as the preservation of himself and the rest of that society shall require " (326). Secondly, "the power of punishing he wholly gives up, and engages his natural force (which he might before employ in the

execution of the law of nature, by his own single authority, as he thought fit) to assist the executive power of the society, as the law thereof shall require" (326). Thus, according to Locke, once an individual enters into political society, he no longer has the right to preserve himself and others in the way that he personally thinks is best, nor does he have the right to personally judge and punish transgressors of the law in the way that he thinks is best. These particular natural rights he entrusts to his government, so that his individual property rights, and the property rights of all the members of his political community, will be protected.

In accordance with his belief that all humans have a natural right to be free, Locke asserts that government is only established through the consent of the people. He argues that every man is free to choose whether or not he joins a particular political society: "no man can be put out of his estate and subjected to the political power of another without his own consent" (309). This means, as Richard Ashcraft explains, that "for Locke, . . . political authority can be conveyed by one individual to another only through the mechanism of consent" (*Locke's Two Treatises* 92). Locke argues that once a man consents to join a political society, he "puts himself under an obligation to everyone of that society to submit to the determination of the majority," unless the members of the political society "expressly agreed in any number greater than the majority" (310, 311). Although what constitutes a "the majority" here is, as Richard Ashcraft explains, "not . . . unequivocally clear," I agree with Ashcraft's conclusion that "*all men*, upon entering into political society, are assumed by Locke to be able to exercise their natural right of suffrage" (*Revolutionary* 583-584, emphasis added). All men, therefore, after consenting to join a political society, have the freedom to vote in an election where the majority of votes will determine what form of government the political society will establish:

the majority having . . . the whole power of the community naturally in them, . . . may put the power of making laws into the hands of a few select men, and their

heirs or successors. . . . Or else into the hands of one man, and then it is a monarchy; if to him and his heirs, it is an hereditary monarchy; if to him only for life, but upon his death the power only of nominating a successor to return to them, an elective monarchy. (327)

Ashcraft is correct, then, in stating that "Locke is committed to the view that the majority of the community may dispose of their political power as they see fit" (*Revolutionary* 183). However, although "the majority" in a political community has the power to decide what form of government shall exist, Locke makes it clear that he does not consider absolute monarchy to be a form of government:

I desire to know what kind of government that is . . . where one man commanding a multitude has the liberty . . . [to] do to all his subjects whatever he pleases, without the least liberty to anyone to question or control those to execute his pleasure? . . . What [de]fence is there in such a state against the violence and oppression of this absolute ruler, the very question can scarce be born. They are ready to tell you that it deserves death only to ask. (267, 307)

As Ashcraft explains, "Locke maintains that, according to natural law, no one *can* consent to the despotical, absolute or arbitrary rule of one man – which is his definition of absolute monarchy" (*Locke's Two Treatises* 155). In Locke's opinion, writes Ashcraft, "absolute monarchy . . . is no form of government at all" (*Locke's Two Treatises* 118). Locke argues, therefore, that government is only established through the consent of the people, but the people cannot consent to form an absolute monarchy because it is not a form of government.

The right to rebel against an unlawful government is another important aspect of Lockean liberalism. In *Two Treatises of Government*, Locke claims that a government has failed to fulfil its purpose and uses force without lawful authority if the legislative power is altered without the consent of the people, if the executive power fails to enforce the law, or if the actions of the legislative or executive power are contrary to the trust placed in them

by the people to preserve, as much as possible, the properties which belong to members of the community. Locke argues, first, that "the people shall . . . judge" whether or not the actions of the legislative or executive power are contrary to the trust placed in them, and second, in accordance with his Christian view of history, that "where there is no judicature on earth to decide controversies amongst men, God in heaven is judge" (386). If government fails to fulfil its purpose and uses force without lawful authority, Locke argues that it is then dissolved and ceases to be a legitimate authority. Those previously under its authority return to the state of nature and the rights that the people entrusted to government are returned to them. Thus, they again have the right to preserve themselves and everyone else in the way that they think is best, and they have a right to judge and punish offenders of the law of nature. Furthermore, a state of war is the consequence of using force without lawful authority: "whosoever uses force without right, as everyone does in society who does it without law, puts himself into a state of war with those against whom he so uses it; and in that state all former ties are cancelled, all other rights cease, and everyone has the right to defend himself, and to resist the aggressor" (379). Locke argues, citing Scripture to support his view, that the use of force is a necessary part of defending oneself and resisting tyranny:

thus, notwithstanding whatever title the kings of Assyria had over Judah by the sword, God assisted Hezekiah to throw off the dominion of that conquering empire. 'And the Lord was with Hezekiah and he prospered; wherefore he went forth, and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not' (2 Kings 18 .7). Whence it is plain that shaking off a power which force and not right hath set over anyone, though it hath the name of rebellion, yet is no offence before God. (362)

According to Locke, then, people consent to establish government to protect their natural property rights, but if government violates these rights or acts without consent and contrary to the trust placed in it by the people, it is dissolved and ceases to be a legitimate authority

and a state of war arises. The people can then, with God's blessing, use force to resist those who formerly administered their government.

Locke also argues that although government may legitimately use force to fulfil its purpose, it should never use force in matters of religion. In *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, he writes that in order to punish those that violate any other person's property rights, "the magistrate [is] armed with the force and strength of all his subjects" (394). However, Locke argues that neither the magistrate, nor anyone else, should use force in matters of religion. Although he makes a number of important qualifications to this argument which I will examine in section three of this chapter, for now I will examine the composition of his argument for religious toleration. In making this argument, Locke finds it necessary to distinguish between the Mosaic law and the gospel. In accordance with his Christian view of history, he explains that "the commonwealth of the Jews . . . was an absolute theocracy," (418) and as such there was no difference between church and state:

The laws established there concerning the worship of one invisible deity were the civil laws of that people, and a part of their political government, in which God himself was the legislator. . . . The subjects of that government both may and ought to be kept in strict conformity with that Church by the civil power. But there is absolutely no such thing, under the Gospel, as a Christian commonwealth. (418)

Locke argues here that the Jews were given their laws by God himself, and therefore their civil power had infallible knowledge of God's will and had the right and obligation to use force upon those within the commonwealth who violated the law and thus God's will. However, under the gospel, such a theocracy does not exist and no one can infallibly determine God's will. He writes that there are a "great varieties of ways that men follow" to get to heaven, but "it is still doubted which is . . . [the] right one" (407). Thus, Locke argues that

the one only narrow way which leads to heaven is not better known to the magistrate than to private persons, and therefore I cannot safely take him as my

guide, who may probably be as ignorant of the way as myself, and who certainly is less concerned for my salvation than I myself am. (408)

This is one reason why Locke asserts that the state should not force people to worship God in a particular way. Similarly, Locke asserts that "the decisions of churchmen, whose differences in disputes are sufficiently known, cannot be any sounder, or safer, than [the magistrate's]. For there is no infallible judge on earth to determine which church worships God the correct way:

every Church is orthodox to itself; to other, erroneous or heretical. Whatsoever any Church believes, it believes to be true; and the contrary thereunto it pronounces to be error. So that the controversy between these Churches about the truth of their doctrines, and the purity of their worship, is on both sides equal; nor is there any judge . . . upon earth, by whose sentence it can be determined. (401)

Because there is no infallible judge upon earth to determine which is the best way to worship God, "nobody . . . , neither single persons, nor Churches, nay, nor even commonwealths, have any just title to invade the civil rights and worldly goods of each other, upon pretence of religion" (403).

Another reason given by Locke for why the state should practice religious toleration, is that God now requires humans to have faith in him and the use of force is ineffectual at creating this faith. Locke explains that salvation is no longer attained by obeying the laws of Moses. Instead, Christ "hath taught men how, by faith and good works, they may attain eternal life" (418). Under the gospel, a man's faith in his religious practices, his belief that the way he worships God is the right way, is a prerequisite to finding salvation: "All the life and power of true religion consists in the inward and full persuasion of the mind; and faith is not faith without believing. . . . Faith only, and inward sincerity, are the things that procure acceptance with God" (394, 410). But Locke points out that the use of force cannot change belief and establish faith: "to believe this or that to be true, does not depend upon our will" (420). A man cannot just decide to change what he

believes is the best way to worship God because he is threatened with violence or persecution: "true and saving religion consists in the inward persuasion of the mind . . . and such is the nature of the understanding that it cannot be compelled to the belief of anything by outward force" (395). The only way to change what a person believes to be true is to *persuade* him that he is wrong: "every man has commission to admonish, exhort, convince another of error, and by reasoning to draw him into truth," for "it is only light and evidence that can work at changing men's opinions" (395). Locke therefore asserts that even if "the magistrate's opinion in religion be sound, and the way that he appoints be truly evangelical, "he would still not have the right to force anyone else to worship God in the correct way because "fire and sword . . . [are not the] proper instruments wherewith to convince men's minds of error, and inform them of the truth" (402). So, according to Locke, even if infallible judgement in religion was possible under the gospel, the state would still not have the right to force people to worship God in the correct way because the use of force is ineffectual at changing belief and establishing faith.

Moreover, Locke argues that using force in matters of religion is not only wrong in itself, but also causes others to sin. First, Locke argues that because God now requires us to have faith, it is pointless to force a person to perform outward physical acts of worshipping God in a particular way if they do not believe that what they are doing is right:

In a word: whatsoever may be doubtful in religion, yet this at least is certain, that no religion which I believe not to be true, can be either true or profitable unto me. In vain therefore do princes compel their subjects to come into their Church communion, under pretence of saving their souls. If they believe, they will come of their own accord; if they believe not, their coming will nothing avail them. (410)

Having presented this proposition, Locke then argues that performing outward worship without faith is not only useless, but offensive to God:

Whatever profession we make, to whatever outward worship we conform, if we are not fully satisfied in our own mind that the one is true, and the other well pleasing

unto God, such profession and such practice, far from being any furtherance, are indeed great obstacles to our salvation. For in this matter, instead of expiating other sins by the exercise of religion, I say in offering thus unto God Almighty such a worship as we esteem to be displeasing unto him, we add unto the number of our other sins those also of hypocrisy, and contempt of his divine majesty. (394)

Locke concludes that the

magistrate has no power to enforce by law . . . the use of any rites or ceremonies whatsoever in the worship of God . . . because whatsoever is practised in the worship of God is only so far justifiable as it is believed by those who practise it to be acceptable unto him. Whatsoever is not done with that assurance of faith, is neither well in itself, nor can be acceptable to God. To impose such things, therefore, upon any people, contrary to their own judgement, is in effect to command them to offend God. (411)

According to Locke, then, another reason the state should not use force in matters of religion is that it is sinful to perform the outward physical acts of worshipping God without faith.

Some of the passages in the *Letter*, however, suggest that even if infallible judgement of God's will was possible under the gospel and the use of force was an effective way of establishing faith, it would still be wrong to use force in matters of religion under the gospel because religious toleration is agreeable to Christ. Locke writes, for example, that Christ never put "the sword into any magistrate's hand, with commission to make use of it in forcing men to forsake their former religion, and receive his" (418). Locke argues here that Christ does not endorse the use of force in religious matters. To increase those who have "faith," Locke recommends that his readers follow Christ's "perfect example, . . . that prince of peace who sent out his soldiers to the subduing of nations and gathering them into his Church, not armed with the sword, or other instruments of force, but prepared with the gospel of peace, and with the exemplary holiness of their conversation. This was his method" (392-393). Thus, Locke determines that "no man can be a Christian without

charity, and without that faith which works, not by force, but by love" (390). Moreover, he writes that

it is not enough that ecclesiastical men abstain from violence and rapine, and all manner of persecution. He that pretends to be a successor of the apostles, and takes upon him the office of teaching, is obliged also to admonish his hearers of the duties of peace and good-will towards all men; as well . . . towards those that differ from them in faith and worship. . . . And he ought industriously to exhort all men . . . to charity, meekness, and toleration. . . . And if anyone that professes himself to be a minister of the word of God, a preacher of the Gospel of peace, teach otherwise, he either understands not, or neglects, the business of his calling, and shall one day give account thereof unto the Prince of Peace. (404)

Locke asserts that a Christian follows Christ's example and uses love and persuasion, not force, to bring people into his church. If a minister of the word of God does not teach religious toleration, Locke implies that he will go to hell. He concludes that "toleration of those that differ from others in matters of religion is so agreeable to the Gospel of Jesus Christ . . . that it seems monstrous for men to be so blind, as not to perceive the necessity and advantage of it in so clear a light" (393). So, irrespective of any other reason, Locke suggests that the state should tolerate religious differences because this is agreeable to Christ.

In accordance with his argument for religious toleration, Locke determines that church and state are separate institutions with distinct functions. The state can legitimately use force, but Locke emphasises "that the whole jurisdiction of the magistrate reaches only to . . . civil concerns, and that all civil power, right, and dominion is bounded and confined to the only care of promoting these things; and that it neither can nor ought in any manner to be extended to the salvation of souls. . . . No man whatsoever ought therefore to be deprived of his terrestrial enjoyments upon account of his religion" (394, 416). So although Locke declares that the state can legitimately use force, he stresses that it may

only do so to fulfil its purpose, which is to protect the individual's property. Locke describes the church, on the other hand, as a "voluntary society of men" who join together to worship God "in such a manner as they judge acceptable to him, and effectual to the salvation of their souls" (396). He explains that "it is a free and voluntary society," because "nobody is born a member of any Church" (396). Everyone is free to join a particular church in order to worship God, and everyone is free to leave a particular church if afterwards they discover that the church they joined does not worship God in a way that they believe is best. According to Locke, this freedom is not compromised by the use of persuasion. Thus, to increase membership of their particular church, members can, like anyone else, persuade people that their way of worshipping God is the right way: "anyone may employ as many exhortations and arguments as he pleases towards the promoting of another man's salvation" (421). Once men have consented to form a church, Locke asserts that like any society, it needs to "be regulated by some laws, . . . the right of making its laws can belong to none but the society itself," and "no church is bound by the duty of toleration to retain any such person in her bosom as, after admonition, continues obstinately to offend against the laws of the society" (397, 399). Locke adds, however, that all ecclesiastical laws and acts of discipline within a religious society should be designed to promote the purpose of religious society, which is to worship God and attain eternal life. He therefore concludes that "nothing ought nor can be transacted in the society relating to the possession of civil and worldly goods. No force is here to be made use of, upon any occasion whatsoever" (399). Thus, although a church can legitimately excommunicate those who continue to violate its laws, Locke states that "in all cases care is to be taken that the sentence of excommunication, and the execution thereof, carry with it no rough usage, of word or action, whereby the ejected person may any wise be damnified in body or estate" (400). Unlike the state, the church cannot, under any circumstances, use force. Thus, Locke reaffirms that "the Church itself is a thing absolutely separate and distinct

from the Commonwealth" (403). Although Locke grants some exceptions to this claim that I will examine in section three, the separation of church and state is an important aspect of Lockean liberalism.

We now have a broad understanding of liberalism, at least as it was formulated by Locke. His political philosophy is founded on his Christian religious beliefs and a Christian view of history. As Joshua Mitchell observes, "for Locke, human beings stand between the beginning with Adam and the redemption at Christ's second coming" (97). The Lockean liberal asserts that God has declared his will in the form of natural law, and it is only by virtue of this natural law that men in the state of nature have the natural right to live, be free, own assets, and judge and punish transgressors of natural law. However, because of the insecurities and dangers for man in the state of nature, men unite and form government to protect their property. In doing so, they entrust to government their natural right to preserve themselves and everyone else in the manner that they think is best, and the natural right to judge and punish transgressors of natural law. In accordance with the belief that all humans have the natural right to be free, the liberal also asserts that government is only established through the consent of the people. Moreover, the liberal asserts that force should not be used in matters of religion, although it is legitimate for anyone to persuade another that their way of worshipping God is best. For the liberal, church and state are separate institutions with distinct functions. The church can use persuasion, but not force, in order to try to save souls. The state, on the other hand, can legitimately use force (and persuasion) in order to protect individual property rights. According to the liberal, however, if a government fails to protect individual property rights and uses force without lawful authority, then it is dissolved, everyone returns to the state of nature, and a state of war arises in which the people have the right to defend themselves as they see fit and punish their attackers.

(ii)

In *Of Civil Power*, Milton, like Locke, subscribes to a Christian view of history and argues that although church and state were combined under the Mosaic law and the use of force was then acceptable in religious matters, an important change has since occurred. Milton writes that Moses "did all by immediate divine direction" (845), and that the kings of Judah "might, when they pleased, receive an answer from God" (845). Because Moses and the kings of Judah received their laws directly from God, they "had a commonwealth . . . incorporated with a national church exercised more in bodily than in spiritual worship: so as the church might be called a commonwealth, and the whole commonwealth a church" (845). So although these "kings of Judah . . . both judged and used force in religion," Milton explains that "then was the state of rigour, childhood, bondage, and works, to all which force was not unbefitting The law was then written on tables of stone, and to be performed according to the letter, willingly or unwillingly" (848). Milton argues here that those who governed before Christ could have direct access to God's will. Those who governed with this "immediate divine direction" were thus the infallible judges of God's will and therefore had the authority to judge "in all causes, not ecclesiastical only, but civil" (849). This means that to fulfil God's will, they could legitimately use force not only in civil matters, but also in matters of religion. The only reason Milton presents this argument, however, is to convince his readers that an important change has since taken place: "our condition changed from legal to evangelical" after "the redemption of our Saviour" (851). Milton's explanation of the consequences of this change constitutes the crux of his argument against the magistrate's use of force in matters of religion.

Like Locke, Milton argues that under the gospel no one can infallibly determine God's will. He writes that although "the kings of Judah and those magistrates under the law

might have recourse, as I said before, to divine inspiration; . . . our magistrates under the gospel have not, more than to the same spirit, which those whom they force have oftentimes in greater measure than themselves" (849). Thus, under the gospel, magistrates no longer have direct access to divine direction and are instead reliant on the "same spirit" as everyone else. By this, Milton means that magistrates, like everyone else, are reliant on the illumination of God's spirit to interpret Holy Scripture correctly. For Milton asserts that Holy Scripture is the record of God's will, but to interpret God's will correctly from Scripture it is necessary to be illuminated with God's spirit. He states that there is "no other divine rule or authority from without us . . . but the holy scripture, and no other within us but the illumination of the Holy Spirit" (840-41). Barker is therefore correct when he states that "the pamphlets of 1659 heavily emphasise Scripture and the Spirit as the only sources of faith" (234). However, Milton considers that "no man can know at all times" whether or not God's spirit is within him, "much less to be at any time for certain in any other" (841). The consequence of never really knowing whether or not God is within us when we interpret Scripture is that we can also never know for sure that we have correctly interpreted Scripture and God's will. For both Locke and Milton, then, everyone is now fallible and no one can claim to know with certainty the will of God. It is for this reason that Milton concludes "that no man or body of men in these times can be the infallible judges or determiners in matters of religion to any other men's consciences but their own" (841). Consequently, Milton argues that under the gospel it is sinful for any person to claim infallible knowledge of God's will or to use force in matters of religion. The Pope is thus "to all true protestants" the "anti-christ, for that he assumes to himself this infallibility over both conscience and the scripture" (841). Moreover, Milton writes that if the magistrate, "being himself so often fallible, . . . bears the sword" in matters of religion, it is

"not in vain only, but unjustly and to evil" (845). Milton therefore argues, like Locke, that it is a sin to claim infallible knowledge of God's will or to use force in matters of religion.

Even if a person has infallible knowledge of God's will, Milton argues that they should still not use force in religious matters because God now requires humans to have faith in him, and the use of outward force is ineffectual at establishing or spreading this faith and instead only increases sin. Under the Mosaic law, people were required by God to obey his laws "willingly or unwillingly" (848). Now, however, Milton argues that they must be willing:

For in religion whatever we do under the gospel, we ought to be thereof persuaded without scruple; and are justified by the faith we have, not by the work we do: Rom. xiv, 5, 'Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.' The other reason which follows necessarily is obvious, Gal. ii, 16, and in many other places of St. Paul, as the ground work and foundation of the whole gospel, that we are 'justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law.' (852)

According to Milton, religion under the gospel is grounded in faith, but you cannot change a person's faith – what this person has been persuaded to believe is true – by using outward force against them: "Surely force cannot work persuasion, which is faith " (852). However, Milton not only argues that the use of outward force is "ineffectual and weak" (848) at changing a person's belief; he also asserts that it increases sin when used in matters of religion. He writes that outward force "cannot therefore justify nor pacify the conscience: and that which justifies not in the gospel, condemns; is not only not good, but sinful to do, Rom. xiv, 23, 'Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin'" (852). The individual who uses force in matters of religion commits a sin, but this sin also increases sin of another kind. For those who are forced to worship God in a way that they do not believe is right also commit sin: "It concerns the magistrate then to take heed how he forces in religion conscientious men, least by compelling them to do that whereof they cannot be persuaded, that wherein they cannot find themselves justified, but by their own consciences condemned, instead of

aiming at their spiritual good, he force them to do evil" (852). To explain further this point, Milton also argues that trying to force profane and licentious men to serve God by making them perform religious and holy duties is "hateful to God" because they cannot really perform such duties, "being themselves unholy" (853). Milton concludes that "force neither instructs in religion nor begets repentance or amendment of life, but, on the contrary, hardness of heart, formality, hypocrisy, and, as I said before, every way increase of sin" (853). Thus, here Milton again makes the same argument as Locke. Both assert that under the gospel humans must have faith in order to find salvation, but that the use of outward force cannot make a person acquire this faith and instead only increases sin.

However, Milton suggests that even if a person could infallibly judge of God's will, and outward force was an effective way of changing a person's belief and producing faith, it would still be sinful to force people to worship God in a particular way because God does not want outward force used in matters of religion. In making this point, Milton refutes those who use Scripture to support the use of force in matters of religion. For example, he is aware that some people rely on Romans 13: 1, "let every soul be subject unto the higher powers," to prove that it is necessary for magistrates to use force in matters of religion. Milton rejects this interpretation for two reasons. First, he writes, "how prove they that the apostle means other powers than such as they to whom he writes were then under; who meddled not at all in ecclesiastical causes, unless as tyrants and persecutors? And from them, I hope, they will not derive either the right of magistrates to judge in spiritual things, or the duty of such our obedience" (844). Here Milton asks how anyone can prove that St. Paul was not referring only to the civil authorities of his time. Milton argues that the civil authorities of St. Paul's time did not use force in matters of religion unless they were tyrants. In other words, some of the civil authorities in St. Paul's time did use force in matters of religion. Nevertheless, by labelling those that did as "tyrants and persecutors,"

Milton cleverly suggests that Romans 13 cannot be referring to these particular rulers. Milton then asks "how prove they next that [St. Paul] . . . entitles them here to spiritual causes from whom he withheld, as much as in him lay, that judging of civil?" (844). In other words, how can they prove that St. Paul entitles the magistrate to judge in civil as well as spiritual matters? To support his argument that God does not want magistrates to judge in spiritual matters, Milton refers to I Corinthians 6:1, "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?" Elsewhere in this treatise, Milton recognises that "some are so eager in their zeal of forcing," that they believe Christ's words recorded in Luke 14: 23, "compel them to come in," proves that force can be used in matters of religion, "as if the parable were to be strained through every word and phrase, and not expanded by the general scope thereof; which is no other here than the earnest expression of God's displeasure on those recusant Jews and his purpose to prefer the Gentiles on any terms before them: expressed here by the word *compel*" (849). Milton explains that God compels "by the inward persuasive motions of his spirit and by his ministers, not by outward compulsions of a magistrate or his officers" (849); he therefore challenges his opponents by interpreting both Romans 13 and Luke 14 as confirmation that God does *not* want outward force used in matters of religion.

Similarly, Milton argues that Christ neither needs nor wants force to be used for this purpose. Milton explains that the "spiritual power by which Christ governs his church . . . [is] all-sufficient . . . [and is] powerful [enough] to reach the conscience and the inward man with whom it chiefly deals, and whom no power else can deal with" (848). Given that Christ's spiritual power is all-sufficient, Milton asserts that

to show us the divine excellence of his spiritual kingdom, [Christ is] able without worldly force to subdue all the powers and kingdoms of this world, which are upheld by outward force only: by which to uphold religion otherwise than to defend the religious from outward violence, is no service to Christ or his kingdom but

rather a disparagement, and degrades it from a divine and spiritual kingdom to a kingdom of this world: which he denies it to be because it needs not force to confirm it. (847)

Here Milton argues that unlike the secular kingdoms of this world, Christ's spiritual kingdom does not require the use of force to uphold it and that trying to do so only degrades it. He argues that God, knowing the worst that men can do, "gave us this liberty as by him judged best," to be free from state imposition in matters of religion (854). Therefore, Milton declares that using outward force to promote religious things is "contrary to what [God] . . . hath commanded" (852), and that "Christ rejects outward force in the government of his church" (847). For both Milton and Locke this is reason enough in itself for the state not to use force in matters of religion.

Although Milton argues that the state should not use force in matters of religion, he indicates that the state should use force in civil matters. Milton frequently implies in this treatise that the magistrate can, in some cases, legitimately use force upon others. He writes that the "civil magistrate" should not be called on "to interpose *his* fleshly force" in matters of religion, and that "there can be no place then left for the magistrate or *his* force in the settlement of religion" (848, 854, emphasis added). So, although the magistrate should not, according to Milton, use force in matters of religion, the above examples clearly show that the magistrate does have the use of force at his disposal. For what purpose, then, should the magistrate use his force? Milton partly answers this question where he writes:

For the two tables, or ten commandments, teach our duty to God and our neighbour from the love of both; give magistrates no authority to force either. . . . As for civil crimes, and of the outward man, which all are not, no, not of those against the second table, as that of coveting; in them what power they have, they had from the beginning, long before Moses or the two tables were in being. (854)

Here Milton argues that although the magistrate cannot force people to love God and their neighbours, he has always had the authority to prevent men from harming their neighbours

(which means he will defend most, but not all, of the commandments on the second table concerning one's obligations to his neighbour). Thus, like Locke, Milton asserts that civil magistrates can legitimately use force to punish "civil crimes" (854) and to defend "our civil rights" (840).

In accordance with his assertions that force should not be used in matters of religion, Milton suggests, in some places in *Of Civil Power*, that civil law should protect the individual's "birthright" (850) to worship God in the manner that he or she thinks is best. He writes, for example, "that the settlement of religion belongs only to each particular church by persuasive and spiritual means within itself, and that the defense only of the church belongs to the magistrate" (854). Milton suggests here that civil law should enable members of a particular church to determine for themselves how best to worship God, and it is up to the magistrate to defend this "rightful liberty" (854). This is also confirmed elsewhere in this treatise, where Milton writes that the magistrate should use force "to defend the religious from outward violence" (847), and that the magistrate should attend to "the defence of things religious settled by churches within themselves" (848). Thus, Milton argues that the state should not use force in matters of religion, but should use force to defend the "right" (854) of the individual to worship God in the manner that he or she thinks is best.

By asserting that one of the functions of government is to ensure that people are not persecuted for their religious beliefs, Milton ends up wanting what Locke wants: freedom of religious worship. Locke does not claim that protecting this freedom is one of the functions of government; he does, however, argue that saving souls is not the function of government and that if government does its job and protects its citizens' individual property rights, then "no man whatsoever ought . . . to be deprived of his terrestrial enjoyments upon account of his religion" (416). Thus, although here the arguments of Milton and Locke

differ slightly, the result is the same: both want freedom of religious worship (although again I must point out that both make important exceptions that I will discuss in part three of this chapter). As I have already indicated, Milton describes this freedom of religious worship as a "birthright" and a "rightful liberty," and elsewhere in this treatise he describes it as a "sacred gift of God" (852). Thus, he also uses the same words that Locke uses to describe freedom, and in doing so presents the liberal concept of freedom as a God-given quality that is natural to mankind. However, Milton argues that religious freedom is a "right" without reference to natural law, which for Locke is that by virtue of which all rights exist. Locke never describes this freedom of religious worship as a natural right, although it is difficult to understand why, given that he argues that it is a freedom that God endorses. Nevertheless, although their arguments differ slightly, Milton and Locke both assert that the individual should be free to worship God in a way that he or she thinks is best.

Milton provides the same reasons for claiming that the magistrate should not use force in matters of religion as he does for claiming that the church authorities should not use force either. He writes that because of the many "injustices of force and fining in religion, besides what I most insist on, the violation of God's express commandment in the gospel, . . . church governors cannot use force in religion" (840). Milton, however, recognises that "some will object that this overthrows all church discipline," to which he replies: "true church discipline . . . is exercised on them only who have willingly joined themselves in that covenant of union, and proceeds only to a separation from the rest, proceeds never to any corporal enforcement or forfeiture of money, which in all spiritual things are the two arms of Antichrist, not of the true church" (842). He supports this assertion with reference to the gospel: "we read not that Christ ever exercised force but once, and that was to drive profane ones out of his temple, not to force them in" (853).

Thus, he concludes that excommunication is a legitimate way for the church to exercise discipline upon its members. However, like Locke, Milton emphasises that the church must not excommunicate people "to destruction, but, as much in her lies, to a final saving. Her meaning, therefore, must needs be that . . . her driving out brings on no outward penalty" (853). As an example, Milton reveals that from his point of view all Catholics probably worship God in the wrong way: he asserts that a heretic is someone "who maintains traditions or opinions not probable by scripture, who, for ought I know, is the papist only" (844). However, he writes that although "such as these, indeed, were capitally punished by the law of Moses, as the only true heretics, idolaters, plain and open deserters of God and his known law, . . . in the gospel such are punished by excommunication only: Tit. iii, 10, 'An heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject'" (844). So although Milton believes that Catholics probably worship God in the wrong way, he concludes here that under the gospel they should not be corporally punished for this by the church. Instead, it is only legitimate for a church to excommunicate Catholics. Thus, like Locke, Milton asserts that the church can only legitimately exercise discipline through excommunication; it cannot legitimately use force against, or take money from, those who worship God in a different way.

Like Locke, Milton also asserts that the church should use persuasion rather than force to achieve its purpose. He frequently points out that "the state of religion under the gospel is far differing from what it was under the law" (848), and argues that "now is the state of grace, manhood, freedom, and faith, to all which belongs willingness and reason, not force" (848). Moreover, he again uses Scripture to support his argument: "the true people of Christ, as is foretold, Psalm cx, 3, 'are willing people in the day of his power'" (849). Thus, as I have previously mentioned, Milton argues that under the gospel people must have faith and be *willing* to serve and worship God in order to find salvation. For

Milton, however, this belief and willingness can only be effectively advanced by persuasion, and not force: "force cannot work persuasion, which is faith" (852). Here Milton makes the argument, also made by Locke, that the use of persuasion is the only way to change a person's belief and establish faith. Thus, he writes that "the settlement of religion belongs only to each particular church by persuasive and spiritual means within itself" (854). Once a church has decided upon how best to serve and worship God, its members can legitimately persuade others to join their way of worshipping God "by fit and proper means ordained in church discipline, by instant and powerful demonstration to the contrary; by opposing truth to error, no unequal match" (849). Like Locke, then, Milton argues that the church can legitimately use persuasion but not force to try to establish true faith.

In a number of important ways, then, Milton's argument in *Of Civil Power* is the same as Locke's in *A Letter Concerning Toleration*. Milton starts with the premise that under the gospel nothing is "more different than church and state government" (844). He then argues, like Locke, that the state should not use its force in matters of religion because, under the gospel, no one can infallibly determine God's will, force is ineffectual at changing belief and establishing faith, and Christ neither wants nor needs force to be used in this way. However, both Milton and Locke maintain that the state can legitimately use force in civil matters. Moreover, they both assert that although the church cannot legitimately use force, it can legitimately use persuasion to achieve its purpose of establishing faith. Given that Locke's late political thought is legitimately regarded as a definitive statement of liberal political thought, the fact that Milton's argument in *Of Civil Power* is in a number of important ways the same as Locke's in the *Letter* means that Milton is a liberal in this treatise.

(iii)

Although Milton preaches religious toleration and asserts the separation of church and state, he compromises this ideal in a number of ways. This has been observed by Barker, who writes that although "the arguments of the last ecclesiastical pamphlets constituted a demand for unrestricted liberty [in religion] (especially in *Of Civil Power*) . . . it is nevertheless true that . . . [Milton's] conclusions were . . . modified by restraining limitations" (235). However, the presence of these restraining limitations does not necessarily mean that Milton departs from Lockean liberalism. In "The Limits of Locke's Toleration," William Walker demonstrates that Locke's theory of toleration, as it expressed in *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, is also compromised in a number of ways. Thus, to determine whether the various limitations that Milton places on his theory of religious toleration distance him from or align him with liberal political thought, I will first need to examine the ways in which Locke places limits on his theory of religious toleration.

One of the problems that Walker identifies is that the separation of church and state, which Locke asserts as one of the premises in his argument for religious toleration, is compromised by Locke's assertion that no such boundary exists under theocratic government. As I have already shown, Locke maintains that "the commonwealth of the Jews . . . was an absolute theocracy," and that as such "the laws established there concerning the worship of one invisible deity were the civil laws of the people, and a part of their political government" (418). Walker explains that here Locke "implicitly defines the commonwealth as any society founded for the sake of various interests where those interests may include religious interests" (140), and that this conflicts with his opening definition of a commonwealth as "a society of men constituted only for the procuring, preserving, and advancing of their own civil interests" (393). Walker points out that "the

opening definition of the church and commonwealth combined with Locke's treatment of ancient Israel as a commonwealth really amounts to this: the church and commonwealth are absolutely separate, except when they are absolutely the same" (141). So "when some kind of theocracy is in place (absolute theocracy presumably being only one kind of theocracy), the boundary between church and commonwealth disappears. And once this happens, it becomes legitimate for the magistrate (who is also an ecclesiast) to use outward force to persecute those who are engaging in what he deems to be idolatrous practises of worship" (141). Walker rightly concludes that by Locke's own principles in the *Letter*,

the Pope is justified in persecuting, or ordering the civil powers of catholic commonwealths to persecute, those who violate ecclesiastical law. . . . Given that the Catholic church is a kind of theocracy, a commonwealth in which there is no difference between church and commonwealth, the magistrate of this commonwealth, like that of ancient Israel, would be justified, by the premises of Locke's own argument in favour of toleration, in persecuting those members of that commonwealth who violated ecclesiastical law. (142)

Thus, in this respect, Locke compromises the distinction between church and state, which is vital to his argument for religious toleration.

Walker also points out that Locke's argument for religious toleration is further compromised by his claim that the magistrate can forbid any religious rite or ceremony under certain conditions. For example, Locke writes that the magistrate is not obligated to tolerate those that "have a mind to sacrifice infants, or . . . lustfully pollute themselves in promiscuous uncleanness, or practice any other such heinous enormities" (414). The reason these things should not be tolerated, writes Locke, is that they "are not lawful in the ordinary course of life, nor any private house; and therefore neither are they so in the worship of God, or in any religious meeting" (415). Walker rightly concludes here that "the magistrate is not obligated to tolerate and may forbid under the threat of his outward force any religious rite or ceremony which is not lawful in the ordinary course of life"

(138). However, Locke goes on to argue that even things that are lawful in the ordinary course of life can still be banned by the magistrate under certain conditions. He writes that if a person can lawfully kill his own calf at his own home, then he should be able to legally kill his calf at a religious meeting. However,

if peradventure such were the state of things, that the interest of the Commonwealth required all slaughter of beasts should be forborne for some while, in order to the increasing of the stock of cattle, that had been destroyed by some extraordinary murrain, who sees not that the magistrate, in such a case, may forbid all his subjects to kill any calves for any use whatsoever? Only 'tis to be observed that in this case the law is not made about the religious but the political matter; nor is the sacrifice but the slaughter of calves thereby prohibited. (415)

The magistrate can therefore forbid any religious practice if that conflicts with the "interest of the Commonwealth." Walker discusses how this passage significantly limits Locke's theory of toleration:

Given that any practice may, under certain circumstances, conflict with civil interest, no practice which a church regards as part of its worship is, on principle, beyond the jurisdiction of the magistrate; any rite and ceremony may, given certain circumstances, be forbidden by the magistrate; all churches may, in some situations, be destroyed by the magistrate. And these circumstances need not be so 'extraordinary' – in Locke's example, the magistrate's destruction of the church whose worship includes the killing of calves is grounded in nothing more than a shortage of beef. (139)

Ultimately, then, no religious practice is exempt from the magistrate's control.

Locke takes advantage of this qualification in his theory of religious toleration and argues that atheists and Catholics should be not be tolerated by the state. He writes that "those are not at all to be tolerated who deny the being of a God," because "the promises, confidence, and oaths, which are the bonds of human society, can have no hold upon an atheist" (426). So, according to Locke, because atheists cannot be trusted they need not be tolerated by the magistrate. Moreover, Locke strongly suggests that Catholics should not

be tolerated because they serve a foreign ruler and are therefore a threat to the interests of the English commonwealth. In *An Essay Concerning Toleration* (1667), Locke writes that it is "impossible . . . to make papists (whilst papists) friends to your government, being enemies to it both in their principles and interest" (202). For this reason, Locke concludes that "Roman Catholics . . . ought not to be tolerated by the magistrate in the exercise of their religion" (197). Although Catholics are not explicitly mentioned in the *Letter*, it is reasonable to assume that his argument here is also directed against Catholicism:

that Church can have no right to be tolerated by the magistrate which is constituted upon such a bottom that all those who entered into it do thereby, *ipso facto*, deliver themselves up to the protection and service of another prince. For by this means the magistrate would give way to the settling of a foreign jurisdiction in his own country, and suffer his own people to be listed, as it were, for soldiers against his own government. (426)

He suggests here that Catholicism should not be tolerated by the English magistrate because its members are obliged to protect and serve the Pope, rather than the English government.

Locke also suggests that Catholics should not be tolerated because they do not tolerate others. He writes, in the *Letter*, that "no opinions contrary to human society, or to those moral rules which are necessary to the preservation of civil society, are to be tolerated by the magistrate" (424), and that those

who attributed unto the faithful, religious, and orthodox, that is, in plain terms, unto themselves, any particular privilege or power above other mortals, in civil concernments; or who, upon pretence of religion, do challenge any manner of authority over such as are not associated with them in the ecclesiastical communion: I say these have no right to be tolerated by the magistrate; as neither those that will not own and teach the duty of tolerating all men in matters of mere religion. (425)

Locke argues here that those who do not believe in toleration, teach toleration, or practice toleration, should not be tolerated themselves. Thus, as Walker points out, "all members of

all churches must, first, claim that they believe in the duty of religious toleration and, secondly, teach that all men have a duty to tolerate others' religious beliefs. The magistrate may persecute with outward force those who do not" (145). It is for this reason that Locke argues explicitly in the *Essay* that the magistrate should not tolerate Catholics: "papists are not to enjoy the benefit of toleration because where they have power they think themselves bound to deny it to others" (202). Once again, although Locke never directly mentions Catholics in the *Letter*, it is reasonable to conclude that his argument here was intended to justify state persecution of Catholics. This interpretation is supported by Ashcraft, who writes that "Locke repeats in the *Letter* all the standard allegations against Catholics that were so common in the exclusion-crisis pamphlet literature. . . . These charges, taken together, are sufficient grounds for denying toleration to Catholics" (*Revolutionary* 502-503).

Thus, in the name of protecting the interests of the commonwealth, Locke transcends the "fixed and immovable" (403) boundaries that divide church and state and argues that those who do not tolerate and those whose religion binds them to a foreign ruler, by which he means Catholics, as well as those who do not believe in God, should not be tolerated by the magistrate. Ashcraft is therefore correct when he observes that "as a contribution to the political debate on toleration," the *Letter* "represents an attempt both to occupy the higher ground of principles and at the same time to rake up the most basic anti-papery prejudices and fears that shaped the popular response to James' policies" (*Revolutionary* 498). So although Locke preaches religious toleration and asserts that church and state should be separate, he compromises this position by arguing that atheists, Catholics, and many others should not be tolerated by the state.

This contradiction constitutes a major problem for Lockean liberalism: it can never separate itself from its religious foundations. As I have shown, Locke's political thought

derives from his understanding of God. Locke's political assertions are therefore the product of his religious beliefs. It is *because of his religious beliefs* that Locke asserts, for example, that the magistrate can legitimately forbid any religious practice if it conflicts with "the interest of the Commonwealth." These interests of the commonwealth are founded on Locke's religious belief that God has provided man with natural property rights that government should protect. Thus, when Locke asserts that it is in the state's best interest not to tolerate atheists or Catholics, essentially it is because they hold beliefs about church and state that are different from his own. In this respect, Locke's Protestant political beliefs are similar to the political beliefs of Catholics: both derive their political beliefs from their religious beliefs, both assume their political beliefs to be infallible, and both determine that the magistrate should persecute those who have certain religious beliefs or practises. The religious beliefs of Catholics led them to argue that Protestants should be persecuted by the state, and Locke's religious beliefs led him to argue that Catholics should be persecuted by the state. As this example shows, because Lockean liberalism is a political philosophy founded on religious beliefs, the opponents of Lockean liberalism will always be both political and religious opponents. So although Lockean liberals assert the need for religious toleration and the separation of church and state, they can never achieve either because these assertions are founded on religious beliefs. Lockean liberals also assert that all those who hold views that conflict with the politics of Lockean liberalism will not be tolerated. We can conclude, therefore, that Lockean liberalism only offers a very limited form of religious toleration: only those who conform with the politics of Lockean liberalism will be tolerated; all those who disagree with the politics of Lockean liberalism, or who hold religious beliefs or practices that conflict with the politics of Lockean liberalism, will not be tolerated.

Having established that liberalism harbours a limited theory of religious toleration, I am now able to determine more comprehensively how Milton stands in relation to this political philosophy. We can begin by observing that like Locke, Milton compromises his theory of religious toleration by asserting that under theocracy religious persecution is justified. He suggests that if rulers receive "immediate divine direction" and "had a commonwealth by . . . [God] delivered them, incorporated with a national church," then "the church might be called the commonwealth, and the whole commonwealth the church" (845). When such a theocracy exists, Milton argues that "the law had no distinct government or governors of church and commonwealth, but the priests and Levites judged in all causes, not ecclesiastical only, but civil" (849). Moreover, Milton writes that under a theocracy, the use of "force was not unbefitting" and the laws (civil and ecclesiastical) were "to be performed according to the letter, willingly or unwillingly" (848). Milton therefore argues that under the law of Moses, religious persecution was justified because it was a theocracy and rulers could receive immediate divine direction. Under the gospel, Milton argues that because rulers can no longer receive immediate divine direction and church and state are separate, religious persecution is no longer justified. This, however, is just Milton's interpretation of what God wants under the gospel, and Milton himself admits that "the knowledge and service of God . . . [is] liable to be variously understood by human reason," and "no man or body of men in these times can be the infallible judges or determiners in matters of religion" (840-41). Milton suggests, that is, that if rulers do receive immediate divine direction then they are justified in using force in matters of religion. However, according to Milton's admittedly fallible judgement, rulers do not receive immediate divine direction under the gospel. Catholics disagree with Milton because they believe that the Pope does receive immediate divine direction under the gospel. According to Milton's own principles in this treatise, it is perfectly reasonable for

Catholics not to agree with Milton, since no one can infallibly determine in matters of religion and God's will is liable to be variously understood by human reason. Moreover, "given that the Catholic church is a kind of theocracy, a commonwealth in which there is no difference between church and commonwealth, the magistrate of this commonwealth, like that of ancient Israel, would be justified" by the premises of Milton's own argument in favour of toleration, "in persecuting those members of that commonwealth who violated ecclesiastical law" (Walker 142). Walker's comments here actually refer to the premises of Locke's argument, but can be applied with equal accuracy to the premises of Milton's argument. By compromising his theory of religious toleration in this respect, Milton's political thought is similar to Locke's.

Like Locke, Milton also suggests that religious practices that conflict with civil interests should not be tolerated. For example, he writes:

Let them cease then to importune and interrupt the magistrate from attending to his own charge in civil and moral things, the settling of things just, things honest, the defence of things religious settled by the churches within themselves; and the repressing of their contraries determinable by the common light of nature. (848)

Here Milton suggests that it is the magistrate's job to defend a particular church's ability to worship God in the manner that its members have decided is best. However, he qualifies this by suggesting that the magistrate should nevertheless repress anything that he deems to be in conflict with his attending to civil and moral things, and this he can determine with reference to "the common light of nature." If, therefore, the magistrate uses "the common light of nature" to determine that a religious practice conflicts with the interests of the state, he should, according to Milton, repress it. Thus, the magistrate can, under certain circumstances, repress any religious practice. Given that no religious practice is, on principle, beyond the jurisdiction of the magistrate, Milton's theory of religious toleration is again compromised.

Milton further limits his theory of religious toleration by suggesting that the magistrate should not tolerate those who interpret Scripture in a way that is probably wrong. He argues that by repressing things that conflict with the interests of the state, the magistrate will not "constrain or repress religion probable by scripture, but the violators and persecutors thereof" (848). Put another way, Milton argues that by repressing things that conflict with the interests of the state, the magistrate will only be constraining or repressing "the violators or persecutors" of religion not "probable by scripture." The interests of the state are clearly conflated here with religious issues. The function of the state is presented as determining what is probably God's will and repressing what is probably not God's will. Thus, if a religious belief or practice is, according to the magistrate's judgement, contrary to "the common light of nature" or not "probable by scripture," then, Milton argues, the magistrate can legitimately use force against it. Milton's theory of religious toleration is therefore similar to Locke's, in the sense that both provide the magistrate with the opportunity to repress legitimately any religious belief or practice.

Milton takes advantage of this qualification in his theory of religious toleration and argues that Catholics should not be tolerated by the state. He writes,

their religion the more considered, the less can be acknowledged a religion, but a Roman principality rather, endeavouring to keep up her old universal dominion under a new name, and mere shadow of catholic religion; being indeed more rightly named a Catholic heresy against the scripture, supported mainly by a civil and, except in Rome, by a foreign power: justly therefore to be suspected, not tolerated, by the magistrate of another country. (846)

Here Milton argues that Catholicism is much more a Roman political power than it is a religion. The English magistrate, therefore, is right to regard Catholics as subjects of a foreign prince, and a political threat, and therefore not to tolerate them. This argument closely resembles Locke's implied argument in the *Letter*. Like Locke, then, Milton

condones state persecution of Catholics on the grounds that they are essentially citizens of a foreign country and a threat to the English.

Elsewhere in *Of Civil Power*, Milton argues that those who consider themselves to be infallible judges of God's will and use force in matters of religion should also be persecuted by the state, and he identifies Catholics as a group worthy of state persecution for this reason. He writes that those "who [use] force [in matters of religion], though professing to be protestants, [do not] deserve . . . to be tolerated themselves" (846). Thus, like Locke, Milton asserts that those who use force in matters of religion should not be tolerated. Furthermore, Milton associates this crime with Catholicism or, in his words, "popery" (846). For example, he declares that "the papist, judging by his principles, punishes them who believe not as the church believes," and that those who use force in matters of religion are "guilty of popery in the most popish point" (846). Milton therefore indicates, like Locke, that because Catholics use force in matters of religion they "may not hence plead to be tolerated" (846).

Milton also suggests that the state should persecute Catholics because they are idolaters. In *Of Civil Power*, he clearly connects Catholicism with heresy and idolatry. He defines a heretic as a person "who maintains traditions or opinions not probable by scripture," and adds, "who, for ought I know, is the papist only" (844). Milton argues that as "the only true heretics, idolaters, plain and open deserters of God and his known law," Catholics "were capitally punished by the law of Moses . . . but in the gospel such are punished by excommunication only" (844). Here Milton clearly identifies Catholics as heretics and idolaters, but argues that under the gospel they should not be persecuted by the state. This argument, however, is later discarded by Milton:

For idolatry, who knows it not to be evidently against all scripture, both of the Old and New Testament, and therefore a true heresy, or rather an impiety, wherein a right conscience can have nought to do; and the works thereof so manifest that a

magistrate can hardly err in prohibiting and quite removing at least the public and scandalous use thereof. (846)

Here Milton argues that idolatry is a heresy and should not be tolerated by the state. Milton has already stated that for all he knows, only Catholics commit heresy. So according to Milton idolatry is a heresy and only Catholics commit heresy. Thus, he strongly suggests that Catholics are idolatrous. It therefore becomes clear that his call for the state persecution of idolaters, is largely a call for the state persecution of Catholics. This determination is also supported by Woolrych, who writes, "popery Milton brackets with idolatry, and he would have the magistrate tolerate neither" (50). Similarly, Barker writes that "idolatry . . . seemed to Milton obviously intolerable," and that "to the Puritan mind it was practically indistinguishable from popery; Milton therefore denied freedom . . . to Roman Catholics" (251).

Ultimately, then, Milton's theory of religious toleration only applies to Protestants who tolerate other Protestants. He argues that Protestants who use force in matters of religion against other Protestants do not deserve to be tolerated themselves. Moreover, he argues that Catholics should not be tolerated because they are the subjects of a foreign prince and are therefore politically dangerous; they claim infallibility and use force in matters of religion; and they are idolaters. Accordingly, Milton's theory of religious toleration alters over the course of his argument in *Of Civil Power*. One of his opening assertions, for example, is that "*no man* ought to be punished or molested by any outward force on earth" for his "belief or practice in religion" (840, emphasis added). Later, however, he asserts that "*no Protestant* . . . ought . . . to be forced or molested for religion" (846, emphasis added). Like Locke, Milton preaches religious toleration on the one hand, but on the other excludes all non-Protestants (including atheists) and attempts to justify the state persecution of Catholics.

This contradiction exists because Milton's Protestant political thought is plagued with the same problems as Lockean liberalism. Milton's political assertions, like Locke's, are founded on his religious beliefs. One of Milton's political assertions, for example, is that Catholics should not be tolerated by the civil magistrate because their religious beliefs conflict with the interests of the state, one of which is to ensure that every individual is able to worship God in the manner that he or she thinks is best. One reason that Milton makes this assertion is that he believes, first, that there is "no other divine rule or authority from without us . . . but the holy scripture, and no other within us but the illumination of the Holy Spirit" (840-41). He also believes that "no man can know at all times" whether he is illuminated with the Holy Spirit "much less to be at any time for certain in any other" (841) and, therefore, that "no man or body of men in these times can be the infallible judges or determiners in matters of religion" (841). These religious beliefs in part account for Milton's assertion that the state should ensure that every individual is able to worship God in the manner that he or she thinks is best. The religious beliefs of Catholics, however, lead them to very different political conclusions. According to Milton, "the pope . . . assumes to himself . . . infallibility over both the conscience and the scripture" (841); Catholics believe that following the Pope's instructions, communicated to the individual through the strict hierarchy of the Catholic church, is more important than following their own interpretation of Scripture; and "the papist" uses force in matters of religion and "punishes them who believe not as the church believes" (846). Thus, Milton's religious beliefs lead him to conclude that the state should not use force in matters of religion and should ensure that the individual is able to worship God in the manner that he or she thinks is best, whereas the religious beliefs of Catholics lead them to conclude that the state should use force in matters of religion and should ensure that the individual worships God in the manner that the Catholic church thinks is best. So Milton supports persecution of Catholics

because of the particular ways in which their religious beliefs differ from his own. Realising that this compromises his theory of religious toleration, Milton adds that if Catholics "ought not to be tolerated, it is for just reason of state more than of religion" (846). Despite Milton's efforts to conceal the connection between his religious beliefs and his political assertion that Catholics should be persecuted by the state, such a connection does exist and cannot be severed. For Milton's political thought, like Locke's, cannot be separated from the Protestant religious beliefs on which it is founded. As Barker points out, for Milton "the strict segregation of the spiritual and natural was not only undesirable but impossible," for he "never abandoned his belief in the need for discipline according to absolute divine truth" (279, 332). This inability to separate church and state proves to be a problem for Milton's theory of religious toleration in *Of Civil Power*, just as it is for Locke in the *Letter*.

In *Of Civil Power*, then, Milton's political thought is the same as Locke's in a number of ways. Like Locke, he promotes religious toleration for the reasons that no one can infallibly determine God's will, force is ineffectual at changing belief and establishing faith, and God does not want force used in matters of religion. Milton also argues, like Locke, that the state has the authority to use force in civil matters. Both also argue that although the church should never use force, it can legitimately use persuasion to change belief, establish faith, and increase membership.

Like Locke, Milton also compromises the asserted boundaries between church and state and places limits on his theory of religious toleration: he argues that under theocracy religious persecution is justified, religious practices that conflict with the interests of the state should not be tolerated, and those who interpret Scripture in a way that is probably wrong should not be tolerated. The result is that the state can, under certain circumstances, repress any religious belief or practice. Milton exploits this qualification in his theory of

religious toleration and argues that Catholics should not be tolerated by the state because they are the subjects of a foreign prince and are therefore threat to the state, they believe that they have infallible knowledge of God's will, and they use force against those who have different religious beliefs and practices. Moreover, he suggests that the state should persecute Catholics because they are idolaters. Thus, Milton's theory of religious toleration ultimately applies to Protestants only. This limited theory of religious toleration confirms Milton as Lockean liberal in this treatise. For as Walker has pointed out, Locke's theory of religious toleration is also limited. The politics of both Locke and Milton are a product of their Protestant religious beliefs, and they both end up asserting that all those who do not conform with their political assertions, or who hold religious beliefs that conflict with their political assertions, should not be tolerated by the state. In *Of Civil Power*, then, Milton in many ways makes the same arguments as Locke, which means there are strong grounds for thinking of Milton as a liberal in this tract. There are, however, no grounds for thinking of Milton as a republican in this tract.

3. MACHIAVELLI, LOCKE, AND THE STATE:

MILTON'S *THE READY AND EASY WAY*

(i)

In this chapter I will begin to analyse the late Milton's relationship to republican and liberal political thought by examining his political thought in the second edition of *The Ready and Easy Way*. This pamphlet was published in April 1660, during a time of increased political unrest. After the death of Oliver Cromwell in 1658, his son Richard was made Protector but did not remain in this position for long. The army opposed the Protectorate Parliament's intention to tighten state control of the church, and in April, 1659, General Charles Fleetwood, supported by some five hundred army officers, forced Richard to resign and dissolve his parliament (Fallon 180). Under rising pressure from the more radical junior army officers, Fleetwood was persuaded to restore the old Rump Parliament, which had previously been dismissed by Cromwell in 1653. However, with memories of 1653 still fresh, the members of this newly established parliament instituted measures to restrict the powers of Fleetwood, the commander-in-chief, and to weed out those army officers who were felt to be closely associated with the Cromwellian regime. On 13 October, 1659, the army, under the command of General John Lambert, dissolved the Rump Parliament and set up a Committee of Safety. But this, too, proved to be an unstable power structure. As Robert T. Fallon points out, many people did not accept the army's Committee and instead displayed "frequent open expressions of sentiment for the return of the king," and "there was strong agitation in the streets of London for the restoration of the Rump" (194, 185). In response to this popular unrest, on 21 February 1660, General George Monk forced the Committee of Safety to readmit a number of the Parliament

members who had been excluded by Pride's Purge in 1648 because of their willingness to continue negotiating with Charles I (Worden, *Stuart England* 123).

It was after these events that Milton published the first edition of *The Ready and Easy Way*, with which he hoped "to remove if that be possible, this unsound humour of returning to old bondage [monarchy]" (*Complete Prose Works* 354-355). Moreover, to secure this end, Milton also wrote a letter to Monk in which he tells him that in order to secure "our Liberties . . . the chief Gentlemen out of every County" should be educated on "the Danger and Confusion of readmitting Kingship in this land" ("Present Means" 393). He recommends to Monk that a "General Council" be established, "whose Office must be, with due Caution, to dispose of Forces, both by sea and land, under the conduct of your Excellency, for the preservation of Peace, both at home and abroad" (394). If, however, the General Council meets and its members "refuse these fair and noble Offers of immediate Liberty, and happy Condition," then there are certainly sensible Englishmen "in every County who will thankfully accept them" (395).³ Fallon rightly explains that here Milton is advising Monk to dissolve the General Council if its members demonstrate any monarchist leanings. This he will easily achieve, Milton advises, since he has "a faithful Veteran Army, so ready, and glad to assist you in the prosecution thereof" (395).⁴ Despite Milton's advice, however, General Monk appears to have been set on making popular opinion the final arbitrator on the type of government chosen for England. On 16 March, in response to further pressure by Monk, the new Rump Parliament dissolved itself and issued writs for a new election (Fallon 195). Milton's second edition of *The Ready and Easy Way* was published sometime shortly after this event, since he observes that "writs for new elections have been recalled" (*Complete Poems And Major Prose* 880). Once again, he declares that

³ R.T. Fallon. 201.

⁴ 201.

he hopes "to remove, if that be possible, this noxious humour of returning to bondage" (880). Thus, this second edition of *The Ready and Easy Way* represents Milton's desperate last attempt at convincing his fellow Englishmen that monarchy is not the best form of government for England at this time. The question before us, however, is to what extent does Milton, in attempting to fulfil this task, align himself with liberal and republican political thought.

(ii)

In order to clarify Milton's position in this tract in relation to republicanism, it is first necessary to establish exactly what constitutes "republicanism." Thus, a comprehensive study of republicanism will be presented with reference to the work of Skinner and Pocock, who are both highly regarded political theorists and considered to be leading authorities on republican political thought. Skinner and Pocock both focus on the writings of Niccolò Machiavelli, an influential sixteenth-century Italian republican theorist. According to Skinner, the goal that republican writers "emphasise above all is that of attaining greatness – greatness of standing, greatness of power, greatness of wealth" ("Machiavelli's *Discorsi*" 125). However, republicans assert that to achieve civic greatness, citizens must live a free way of life. In *The Discourses*, Machiavelli begins, writes Skinner,

by connecting the capacity to achieve civic greatness with the enjoyment of 'a free way of life.' The key statement of the case again appears at the start of Book II. 'It is easy to understand how an affection for living a free way of life springs up in peoples. For one sees by experience that cities have never increased either in power or in wealth unless they have been established in liberty.' ("Machiavelli's *Discorsi*" 140)

To acquire civic greatness, then, it is first necessary for citizens to enjoy a free way of life. But what exactly does Machiavelli mean by 'a free way of life?' Skinner explains, in "The

Idea of Negative Liberty," that according to Machiavelli "there have always been two roughly distinguishable groups of citizens," with "contrasting dispositions (*umori*)," and "different reasons for prizing their freedom to pursue their chosen ends" (205): the *grandi*, rich and powerful, on the one hand, and the *plebe* or *popolo*, ordinary citizen, on the other. The *grandi* desire "to obtain power and glory for themselves and avoid ignominy at all costs. . . . Their principal aim is obviously to remain as free as possible from any destruction (*sanza ostaculo*) in order to act in such a way as to acquire glory for themselves by way of dominating others" (205). The main concern of ordinary citizens, however, "will usually be no more than to live a life of security," and "their basic aim is obviously to remain free so far as possible from all forms of interference in order to lead their own undisturbed lives" (205). According to Machiavelli, then, whether citizens desire power and glory or mere security, "a free way of life" equates to the "absence of constraint, especially absence of any limitations imposed by other social agents on one's capacity to act independently in pursuit of one's chosen goals" (206). To republicans like Machiavelli, the freedom to pursue one's chosen goals without constraint is what it means to have a free way of life.

Machiavelli argues, however, that only by living in a free state will citizens be able to enjoy this individual freedom. He maintains, according to Skinner in "The Idea of Negative Liberty," that the only form of polity "in which the citizens can hope to retain any freedom to follow their own pursuits will be one in which it makes sense to say that the community itself is 'living a free way of life'" (206). Skinner explains that by this Machiavelli means a community "that is 'not subject to the control of anyone else,' and is thus able, in virtue of being unconstrained, 'to govern itself according to its own will' and act in pursuit of its own chosen ends" (207). Machiavelli therefore claims that if a community is not free, then neither will its citizens be free. Skinner identifies the two

threats that Machiavelli says must be controlled in order to maintain a free state and consequently individual freedom. First, there is the threat from within a community, which "reflects the desire of the *grandi* to achieve power at the expense of oppressing their fellow-citizens. This is an ineliminable threat, for the *grandi* we have always with us, and they are invariably disposed to pursue these selfish goals" (208). Unless a political community can devise various ways and means of beating down the ambition of the *grandi*, "they will quickly bring it to ruin' and 'reduce it to servitude'" (209). Free communities are also threatened by external threats. Some political communities "are content 'to live quietly and enjoy their liberty within their own boundaries,' but others are ambitious to dominate their neighbours and coerce them into acting as client states" (209). The Romans, for example, "waged continuous war on all the people surrounding them, attaining their own 'supreme greatness,' their own power and glory, by conquering each neighbour in turn, overthrowing their *libertà* and subjecting them to the service of Rome" (209). Skinner writes that "as with individual *grandi*, so with entire communities, this disposition to act ambitiously is altogether natural and ineliminable" (209). Moreover, "just as the clients of ambitious *grandi* find themselves coerced into serving their patron's ends, so too the citizens of any polity that becomes the client of another will automatically forfeit their personal liberty, since they will find themselves forced to do their conqueror's bidding as soon as the community is reduced to servitude" (209). Thus, republicans argue that to enjoy personal freedom it is necessary to live in a free state, a state where servitude arising from internal and external threats is kept at bay and where "the will of the body politic determines its own actions" and "the actions of the community as a whole" (207).

According to Skinner, Machiavelli also insists that, in general, this free state ideal cannot be achieved under monarchy but is possible only under republican forms of government. In "Machiavelli's *Discorsi* and the Pre-Humanist Origins of Republican

Ideas," Skinner says that for a republican like Machiavelli, "the common good is scarcely ever promoted under princely or monarchical rule. . . . Kings are always liable to be suspicious of . . . men of eminent talent who are most capable of serving their country well" (139). On the other hand, "Machiavelli's positive thesis states that the only way to ensure the promotion of the common good must therefore be to maintain a republican form of government" (140). Given the importance of promoting the common good in a free state where the community as a whole determines its own actions, Skinner concludes that for Machiavelli, "it is only possible to live 'in a free state' under a self-governing republic" ("Machiavelli's *Discorsi*" 140), a government consisting of rulers or magistrates who "must always be elected," "must always remain subject to the laws and institutions of the city which elect them," and "must always act to promote the common good – and hence the peace and happiness – of the sovereign body of its citizens" ("The State" 108). Furthermore, Skinner writes that in general Machiavelli "makes a sharp distinction between the freedom of republics and the slavery imposed not merely by tyrants but even by the best kings and princes" (Machiavelli's *Discorsi* 141). Thus, Skinner argues that republicans repudiate monarchy and assert that a free state can only be achieved under republican forms of government.⁵

Machiavelli argues that once a free state is established with a republican constitution, it can only be maintained by willing citizens who have the particular qualities

⁵ Although I refer here to Skinner's argument that republicans repudiate monarchy and are committed to republican forms of government, I am aware that this particular definition of what constitutes republican political thought is contested by some critics. Blair Worden, for instance, argues that "English republicanism of the 1650s is . . . more often a criticism of the English republic than an endorsement of it. Classical and Renaissance republicanism favoured mixed government." ("Milton And Marchamont Nedham" 169). Similarly, in *The Machiavellian Moment*, Pocock argues that mixed government is one of the forms of government recommended by Machiavelli in *The Discourses*. This made it possible for the English, during the interregnum, to adopt republican political thought: "mixed government . . . [was] the term which rendered it possible for the king's subjects to accept the republican tradition." (370). Moreover, according to Pocock, Machiavelli argues that if the populace of a political community becomes corrupt, "the only real hope lies in the *absolute power of one man* of transcendent virtue, who will end corruption by restoring virtue in the people" (206, emphasis added).

required to serve their state. In "The Idea of Negative Liberty," Skinner relates how in *The Discourses* Machiavelli argues that in order to control the unavoidable and constant threats to personal freedom, citizens need actively to serve their state so that it remains free. Machiavelli warns his readers that "unless we are willing personally to contribute to the defence of our community against external aggression, we shall 'lay it open as a prey to anyone who chooses to attack it,' as a consequence of which, sooner than later, we shall find ourselves enslaved" (210). Thus, Skinner writes, "it follows that a readiness to volunteer for active service, to join the armed services, to perform one's military services, constitutes a necessary condition of maintaining one's own individual freedom from servitude" (213). However, in order to be successful in defending the community against the threat of conquest, Machiavelli asserts that citizens will need courage, determination, and prudence. Skinner explains, "prudence tells you when to go to war, how to conduct the campaign, how to bear its changing fortunes" (210). Courage, coupled with sheer determination and persistence, is a "quality indispensable for effective defence. . . . Courage is also the quality that must above all be instilled in every individual soldier if victory is to be grasped" (210).

As well as dealing with the threat of external servitude, citizens must also defend their personal liberty by "preventing the *grandi* from coercing the *popolo* into serving their ends" (213). Machiavelli argues, writes Skinner, that the only way to prevent this from happening "is to organize the polity in such a way that each and every citizen is equally able to play a part in determining the actions of the body politic as a whole. This in turn means a readiness to serve in public office, to pursue a life of public service, to perform voluntary services, [and] constitutes a further necessary condition of maintaining one's own liberty" (213-214). However, in order to be successful at preventing internal servitude, "all citizens who aspire to take a hand in government, to help in upholding the freedom of the

community, must be men of prudence" (211). As well as being a virtue necessary for the prevention of external servitude, prudence is also necessary "to allow the political decisions of a body-politic to be determined by the will of . . . the entire membership of the body itself" ("Republican Ideal" 303). Moreover, in "The Idea of Negative Liberty," Skinner writes that according to Machiavelli "the other quality every citizen must cultivate is a willingness to avoid all forms of intemperate and disorderly behaviour, thus insuring that civic affairs are debated and decided in an ordered, well-tempered style" (212). Skinner points out that "in singling out these attributes, Machiavelli is of course invoking three of the four 'cardinal' virtues listed by the Roman historians and moralists" (214). Machiavelli, however, diverges from these historians and these moralists when it comes to the fourth and most important virtue – justice. For Machiavelli "repudiates the crucial contention that the observance of this virtue is invariably conducive to serving the common good" (215). Machiavelli thus argues that the virtues of prudence, courage, and temperance are necessary if citizens wish to maintain a free state, but he does not agree with the classical republican theorists that the practice of justice is also required.

Nevertheless, all republicans assert that a citizen's personal freedom is dependent upon his ability to cultivate the virtues necessary to serve his state and maintain its freedom. Courage, determination, and prudence are needed to defend the community against foreign invasion, and prudence, temperance and other civic qualities are needed to prevent the ambitious *grandi* from manipulating government for their own ends. In each case, it is in the citizen's best interest to cultivate the virtues necessary to serve his state, because if he does not, his state will not remain free and, as a consequence, he will lose his personal liberty and any chance at civic greatness. Thus, Skinner says that the reason Machiavelli

offers us for cultivating the virtues and serving the common good . . . is always that these represent, as it happens, the best and indeed the only means for us 'to do well'

on our own behalf, and in particular the only means of securing any degree of personal liberty to pursue our chosen ends Although Machiavelli never speaks of interests, it is fair to say that he believes our duty and our interests to be one and the same. (219)

For Machiavelli, then, in order to ensure and enjoy their personal freedom, citizens must cultivate the virtues and work to establish and maintain a free republic. Skinner points out that "Machiavelli is simply reiterating the same classical oxymoron: the price we have to pay for enjoying any degree of personal freedom with any degree of continuing assurance is voluntary public servitude" (210). Thus, for the republican, personal freedom is not a natural right, but rather a reward or privilege that is achieved as a result of the people's virtue and their ability to serve their state and protect it from bondage.

In "The Republican Ideal of Political Liberty," however, Skinner explains that despite Machiavelli's assertion that it is in the best interest of the citizen to cultivate the virtues, he and other "republican writers place all their faith in the coercive powers of the law" to encourage citizens "to act virtuously" (305). Skinner says that in Book 1 of *The Discourses*, Machiavelli "first considers what induced the Roman people to legislate so prudently for the common good when they might have fallen into factional conflicts" (305-306). He proposes that the answer lies in the way their laws were established. Such laws were established under the republican constitution of Rome when a proposed law was passed with the consent of two assemblies, "one assembly controlled by the nobility, another by the common people" (306). The result, writes Skinner, "was that only such proposals as favoured no faction could ever hope to succeed. The laws relating to the constitution thus served to ensure that the common good was promoted at all times" (306). Hence, this mechanism forced the Romans to be prudent and create laws that benefited all. In this way they avoid the danger of internal servitude created by the ambitious *grandi* dominating government and the people for their own benefit.

Machiavelli also valued the influences of religion to help enforce legislation and thus create civic virtue. In *The Machiavellian Moment*, Pocock discusses the role of religion, as it was perceived by Machiavelli in *The Discourses*. He points out that Machiavelli ranks the authors and founders of religion above those who have founded republics or kingdoms. The Prophet, writes Pocock, "is thought of as doing something explicable in human terms, he is the founder of the structure which possesses some property that makes it even more durable than a structure of inherited allegiance. For this reason [Machiavelli ranks the Prophet] . . . above the legislator" (192). However, Pocock adds that to Machiavelli, religion "is not virtue itself," and the aim of "the legislator, at least if he is to found a republic," is to create "a structure of virtue" (192). Thus, Pocock explains that, according to Machiavelli, "the Prophet should aim at being a legislator and providing a religion which will serve as a sub-structure for citizenship. It follows that religious usages are only a part of whatever constitutes civic virtue" (192). In an important sense, then, Machiavelli subordinates religion to politics. He perceives religion to be an effective instrument with which to create and enforce legislation so that civic virtue can be achieved. This, rather than redemption, was of greatest importance to Machiavelli. Pocock writes that Machiavelli "distrusted Christianity – or at least he divorced it from the political good – because it taught men to give themselves to ends other than the city's and to love their own souls more than the fatherland" (202). Machiavelli therefore preferred pagan religion to Christianity "as a social instrument," because it "served the purpose identical with that of the republic" (202). To develop a "dedication of oneself to a common good . . . was the moral content of pagan religion and is the essence of civic virtue" (202). To Machiavelli, religion was therefore a means to an end. It was a political tool that could be used to instil civic virtue, a necessary condition for the maintenance of a free self-governing republic and individual freedom.

Pocock also observes that Machiavelli's political thought is secular in the sense that it expresses a cyclical vision of history which contrasts with the linear Christian vision of history. He explains that for Machiavelli, although a republic can delay the onset of corruption in the long-term, by undertaking a prudent and defensive position, or in the short-term, by undertaking the more glorious aggressive and expansionary stance, ultimately the life of the republic is always finite:

The republic attempted to realise that totality of virtue in the relations of its citizens with one another, but did so on a footing that was temporarily and spatially limited. Because it had a beginning in time, it must both offer an account of how that beginning had been possible and acknowledge that, since it must in theory have an end, its maintenance was no less problematic in its foundation. Because it had a site or location in space, it was surrounded by neighbours with whom its relations were not governed by the virtue existing only as between citizens. Temporarily if not spatially, it faced problems arising from the fact that it was in its own way an innovator; spatially if not temporarily, it was involved in the world of unlegitimated power-relationships. (185)

Because the republic constitutes a temporary place in time and space, it will ultimately be devoured by corruption. Thus, corruption was considered by Machiavelli to be "an irreversible, one-way process, part of the mutability and entropy of sublunary things; personality and polity may be kept in equilibrium or may decay, and there is no third possibility" (211). Pocock concludes that

Machiavelli propounds the view that the amount of virtue in the world at any one time is finite, and that when it is all used up through corruption there will be some kind of cataclysm, after which a few uncorrupted barbarian survivors will emerge from the mountains and begin again. The theory is cyclical and presupposes a closed, because not transcendent, system in the human and moral world. . . . Machiavelli arrives at it both through his abandonment of the dimension of grace and through his decision to regard virtue as existing only in republics – that is, in finite quantities themselves finite in number, space, and time; we should remind ourselves that the only alternative to a cyclical *aeternitas mundi* was a Christian

eschatology. . . . A republican scheme of history therefore continued to be *fortuna*-dominated and cyclical, a matter of finite quantities of energy, rarely mobilized, inclined to be self-destructive and moving towards total entropy until some unpredictable force should mobilize them again. (217-218)

In contrast with the linear Christian vision of history, therefore, the republicans viewed history as cyclical.

By taking the arguments of Machiavelli as their model, Skinner and Pocock thus provide us with a comprehensive definition of what means to be a republican. Essentially, a republican asserts that to achieve civic greatness citizens must live a free way of life. A free way of life only occurs in a free state, and the form that such a state must take is a republic.⁶ Skinner explains Machiavelli's definition of a republic as a government consisting of rulers or magistrates who "must always be elected," "must always remain subject to the laws and institutions of the city which elect them," and "must always act to promote the common good" ("The State" 108). A republican also asserts that a state will only remain free if its citizens cultivate certain virtues, such as courage and prudence, necessary to protect it from internal and external servitude. Thus, it is in the citizen's best interest to cultivate these virtues because they enable him to protect the freedom of his state, which in turn guarantees his personal freedom. However, the republican also relies upon the law, which ideally should be supported by influences of a religion, to ensure that citizens cultivate the virtues necessary to protect their state and hence their own personal freedom. Finally, in contrast to the linear Christian vision, republicans express a cyclical vision of history.

⁶ I refer here to Skinner's definition only. Pocock does not argue that republicans asserted that it was necessary to have a republican form of government (see note 5 on page 69).

(iii)

Working on this definition of republicanism, we can see that in *The Ready and Easy Way*, Milton's assertion that a republic will bring civic greatness to the people conforms with republican political thought. For example, he contrasts the dismal consequences that he believes would follow from the failure to establish a republic in England with the civic greatness achieved by the Netherlands who have established one: he claims that if a republic is not established in England, then the English should be ashamed of themselves, given that "our neighbours the United Provinces, to us inferior in all outward advantages; who notwithstanding, the limits of greater difficulties, courageously, wisely, constantly went through the same work and are settled in all the happy enjoyments of a potent and flourishing republic to this day" (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* 884). Milton suggests here that a republic creates civic greatness in strength, wealth, and happiness. Later in the pamphlet, he makes a similar suggestion, claiming that "of all governments, a commonwealth aims most to make the people flourishing, virtuous, noble, and high-spirited" (897). Milton's use of the word "potent" suggests greatness in power; "virtuous, noble, and high-spirited" suggests greatness in moral standing and disposition; and "flourishing" suggests greatness in wealth. These statements are consistent with the republican argument that a republican government will create civic greatness.

Like the classical republicans, Milton also equates freedom with republican government. In a statement that is distinctively republican, he writes that "the ground and basis of every just and free government . . . is a general council of ablest men, chosen by the people " (888). Here Milton equates a free state with a republican form of government. Throughout *The Ready and Easy Way*, he refers to this government as a "free commonwealth" and argues that it is "the justest government, most agreeable to all due

liberty" (884). Civil liberty will be enjoyed under a republic because its leaders have the ability to make wise decisions for the good of the whole community. For Milton, the purpose of those who are elected to govern is "to consult of public affairs from time to time for the common good" (888). Thus, he writes that under a republic, "no man or number of men can attain to such wealth or vast possession as will need the hedge of an agrarian law (never successful . . .) to confine them from endangering our public liberty" (892). Here Milton's argument appears to reflect the republican belief that civil liberty is dependent upon the avoidance of internal servitude, a consequence of the ambitious *grandi* acquiring so much wealth and power that they can corrupt government. Milton, like Machiavelli and the classical republicans, argues that because those elected to govern a republic make decisions for the common good rather than for just one man or a small number of men, personal civil liberty will not be endangered. He concludes that civil liberties are "never more certain, and the access to these never more open than in a free commonwealth" (898). Thus, like Machiavelli and the classical republicans, Milton equates liberty with republican government.

In *The Ready and Easy Way*, Milton also corroborates the republican tenet that citizens will need to cultivate certain virtues in order to construct and maintain a republican government. Milton says that "to make the people fittest to choose, and the chosen fittest to govern, will be to mend our corrupt and faulty education, to teach the people faith, not without virtue, temperance, modesty, sobriety, parsimony, justice" (891). Thus, Milton asserts that certain qualities will need to be cultivated so that the people choose the best people to govern them and so that those chosen will govern the people the best. It must also be noted that here Milton refers to two of the four virtues acknowledged by the classical republicans: "temperance" and "justice." Elsewhere in this pamphlet, Milton says the people from the United Provinces "courageously" (884) constructed a republic.

Moreover, Milton accepts Aristotle's argument that although men were first governed by kings, when "the number of *prudent* men increased" (893, emphasis added) a free commonwealth was formed and tyrants were disposed of. Hence, as well as "temperance" and "justice," Milton also refers to the other two classical republican virtues, "courage" and "prudence," in connection with the formation of republican government. Thus, Martin Dzelzainis is correct when he writes that in *The Ready and Easy Way*, Milton insists that "if the commonwealth is to flourish and keep its autonomy . . . then both rulers and ruled must cultivate the virtues," and that Milton emphasises "the four cardinal virtues to the study of which Cicero had devoted Book I of *De Officiis*" ("Republicanism" 21). Thus, like Machiavelli and classical republicans, Milton suggests that certain virtues are needed to construct and maintain republican government.

The republican belief in the importance of citizens serving their state is also reflected in *The Ready and Easy Way*. For example, in promoting the goodness of republican government, Milton says, "what government comes nearer to this precept of Christ than a free commonwealth, wherein they who are greatest, are perpetual servants and drudges to the public at their own cost and charges, [and] neglect their own affairs" (885). Although Machiavelli would not have used Christianity to make a favourable comparison with republican government as Milton does here, it is nevertheless significant that Milton stresses the importance of citizens serving their state, rather than just expecting their state to serve them. This concept is an essential part of republican political thought. Later in this pamphlet, Milton says that under a free commonwealth civil liberties will be enjoyed by "every person according to his merit" (896). Here Milton appears to be advocating the republican theory of freedom, because he suggests that freedom is not a given, but an enjoyment that must be earned according to "merit." Given that Milton has already demonstrated that he places importance on citizens serving their state, it is reasonable to

argue that by "merit" Milton is referring to how well a citizen serves the commonwealth, and for Milton serving the commonwealth at this particular time equates to rejecting Charles as monarch. For example, Milton argues that those who want Charles restored "have both in reason and trial of just battle lost the right of the election what the government shall be" (895). According to Milton, those who want Charles restored do not serve their commonwealth and have therefore lost their freedom to vote for the form of government they want. So, although the republicans would not have limited civil liberty in the way that Milton wants to here, his assertion that civil liberties will be enjoyed by "every person according to his merit" conforms with an essential tenet of republican political thought – that individual freedom is dependent upon how well the individual serves his state.

Milton also conforms with republican political thought in this pamphlet, in the sense that he contrasts his support of republican government with criticism of monarchy. He suggests, for example, that while choosing a free commonwealth is "most cherishing to virtue and true religion," it is sinful for people to choose monarchy as their form of government. He refers to the Old Testament where, after the people of Israel decide they want a king to rule them, God tells Samuel, "for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee" (1 Samuel 8: 7-8). Milton interprets this for his readers, asserting that "God in much displeasure gave a king to the Israelites, and imputed it a sin to them that they sought one" (885). Milton also refers to the New Testament where Jesus says to his disciples, "Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles and exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be

great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all" (Mark 10: 42-44). Milton concludes from this that "Christ apparently forbids his disciples to admit of any such heathenish government [monarchy]" (885). These biblical references are used by Milton to suggest to his readers that choosing monarchy as a form of government is against the will of God and therefore sinful. A similar presentation of monarchy is repeated later, where Milton argues that if monarchy returns, those "new royalized presbyterians" who supported Charles will not receive the reward they expect. Milton predicts what will happen if monarchy returns:

Let them but hear the insolencies, the menaces, the insultings of our newly animated common enemies crept lately out of their holes, their hell I might say by the language of their infernal pamphlets, the spew of every drunkard, every ribald; nameless, yet not for want of licence, but for very shame of their own vile persons, not daring to name themselves, while they traduce others by name; and give us to foresee that they intend to second their wicked words, if ever they have power, with more wicked deeds. Let our zealous backsliders forethink now with themselves how their necks yoked with these tigers of Bacchus, – these new fanatics not of the preaching, but the sweating-tub, inspired with nothing holier than the venereal pox – can draw one way under monarchy to the establishing of church discipline with these new-disgorged atheisms. (894)

As Laura Lunger Knoppers points out, "Milton draws on the castigating language of the prophets – sexual impurity, disease, animal yoking, prostitution, vomit – to create powerful satire and invective" (219). Here Milton clearly associates the return of monarchy with a multitude of sins.

Milton also criticises monarchy by presenting it as wasteful, degrading and exploitative. He argues that the people will pay a "lavish price" (885) if monarchy is restored in England. Rather than doing anything to benefit the public, a monarch "will have little else to do but to bestow the eating and drinking of excessive dainties, to set a pompous face upon the superficial actings of state, to pageant himself up and down in progress

among the perpetual bowings and cringings of an abject people, on either side deifying and adoring him for nothing done that can deserve it" (885). Here Milton presents monarchy as excessive, wasteful and superficial. He argues that the people are required to treat the king as if he is a god when he does nothing useful for them. Moreover, Milton presents monarchy as an influence that degrades the English people: "a king must be adored like a demigod, with a dissolute and haughty court about him, of vast expense and luxury, masks and revels, to the debauching of our prime gentry, both male and female; not in the pastimes only, but in earnest, by the loose employments of court service, which will then be thought honourable" (885). Having made his general point on the superficiality of court service, Milton then gives examples to strengthen his point. He writes that if a monarch returns, the nobility and gentry will be "bred up then to the hopes not of public, but of court officers, to be stewards, chamberlains, ushers, grooms even of the close-stool; and the lower their minds debased with court opinions, contrary to all virtue and reformation, the haughtier will be their pride and profuseness" (885). Here Milton argues that monarchy will degrade the English people in body and mind. He also argues that the only reason monarchs aim to make the people wealthy is so that they can then be exploited: "Monarchs will never permit [the people to become flourishing, virtuous, noble, and high-spirited. Monarchs] aim . . . to make the people wealthy indeed perhaps, and well fleeced for their own shearing and the supply of regal prodigality, but otherwise of softest, basest, viciousest, servilest, easiest to be kept under" (897). Here Milton is clearly critical of the monarchical form of government on the grounds that it is exploitative and oppressive.

Milton also argues that monarchy is oppressive because it promotes the servitude of the people. For example, fearing that the English people will elect to restore monarchy, Milton declares in the opening paragraph that by writing this pamphlet he hopes "to remove, if it be possible, this noxious humour of returning to bondage – instilled of late by

some deceivers, and nourished from bad principles and false apprehensions among too many of the people" (880). He knows, however, that he may not succeed: "if the absolute determination be to enthrall us, before so long a Lent of servitude they may permit us a little shroving time first, wherein to speak freely and take our leaves of liberty" (880). This assertion, that if monarchy returns the people will no longer be free, also marks Milton's interpretation of recent historical events. He applauds the Rump Parliament, which just nine days after the execution of Charles I, on 7 February 1649, declared the office and power of a king unnecessary, burdensome, and dangerous to liberty, safety, and public interest (881):

The Parliament of England, assisted by a great number of the people who appeared and stuck to them faithfulest in defence of religion and their civil liberties, judging kingship by long experience a government unnecessary, burdensome, and dangerous, justly and magnanimously abolished it, turning regal bondage into a free commonwealth, to the admiration and terror of our emulous neighbours. (881)

Here Milton presents monarchy as oppressive and expresses his approval of the Rump Parliament's decision to abolish it. Later in this pamphlet Milton argues that having achieved freedom from "regal bondage," the people would really be returning to a servitude from which they would never recover were they to reinstate monarchy:

If we returned to kingship and soon repent (as undoubtedly we shall when we begin to find the old encroachments coming on by little and little upon our consciences, which must necessarily proceed from king and bishop united inseparably in one interest), we may be forced perhaps to fight over again all that we have fought, and spend over again all that we have spent. (884)

Milton suggests here that if monarchy returns, the church and state will be combined at the expense of the peoples' religious freedom, and the English may again have to fight for their freedom. According to Milton, a return to kingship would mean a return to servitude, and therefore this choice would make "vain and viler than dirt the blood of so many thousand

faithful and valiant Englishmen who left us in this liberty, bought with their lives" (884). Milton therefore argues that monarchy is a form of bondage that was justly abolished and that its return would amount to disrespect for those who fought for freedom.

Having made this general argument, Milton then describes in more detail how a king would gain absolute power over the people if he returned to England. He says that "if there be a king, which the inconsiderate multitude are now so mad upon," the grand council "shall be called, by the king's good will and utmost endeavor, as seldom as may be. For it is only the king's right, he will say, to call a parliament; and this he will do most commonly about his own affairs rather than the kingdom's, as will appear plainly so soon as they are called" (892). Milton predicts that

the parliament shall be soon dissolved, or sit and do nothing; not suffered to remedy the least grievance, or enact aught advantageous to the people. Next, the council of state shall not be chosen by the parliament, but by the king, still his own creatures, courtiers and favorites, who will be sure in all their counsels to set their master's grandeur and absolute power, in what they are able, far above the people's liberty. (892-893)

If a monarch is introduced into the government of England, Milton argues that he will soon be able to manoeuvre himself into a position of absolute power at the expense of those elected into parliament and "far above the people's liberty." He says that if the king returns, he will quickly gain control over the army, so that all veterans who fought with Cromwell against the tyranny of Charles I "shall be soon disbanded (and likeliest without arrear or pay)" and will "be questioned for being in arms against their king" (895). Next, Milton details exactly how the king's return would jeopardise the people's liberty. First, he argues that the people's civil liberties will be compromised. He says that if a king returns, he will place "extraordinary levies on our estates," and there will be "indictments, inquiries, discoveries, complaints, informations, who knows against whom or how many" (894). These charges may result in "utmost infliction," "imprisonment, fines, banishment, or

molestation" (894). In general, however, Milton says that if a monarch returns, "disfavor, discountenance, disregard, and contempt on all but the known royalists, or whom he favours, will be plenteous" (894). Milton also discusses in more detail the effects the king's return will have on the people's freedom to worship God in a manner that they think is best. He says that "it hath been observed of old" that kings "have ever suspected most and mistrusted them who were in most esteem for virtue and generosity of mind, so it is now known [that kings] . . . have most in doubt and suspicion them who are most reputed to be religious" (896). Milton adds that kings "hear the gospel speaking much of liberty – a word which monarchy and her bishops both fear and hate" (896). A monarch, writes Milton, is "the natural adversary and oppressor of liberty" (893). If monarchy is going to be restored in England, Milton laments that "our condition is not sound, but rotten, both in religion and all civil prudence . . . all national judgements under foreign or domestic slavery" (898). Thus, in parts of *The Ready and Easy Way*, Milton conforms with the republican assertion that monarchy is a form of government which is incompatible with the freedom of the citizens.

Having made this observation, we can now see that the critics who present Milton as a republican because he repudiates monarchy in *The Ready and Easy Way*, are, to a limited extent, correct. Milton does conform with republican political thought in *The Ready and Easy Way* in the sense that he clearly contrasts the virtues of republican government with the vices of monarchy. As Woolrych observes, this pamphlet celebrates "republican liberty and virtue in contrast with monarchical tyranny and servitude." And Norbrook is in a sense correct when he writes that, in *The Ready and Easy Way*, "Milton both practises and preaches a commitment to the power and value of republican language," and that "Milton sees kingship as a form of blasphemy." There are, however, problems with the claims made by Woolrych, Norbrook, and other critics who base Milton's

republicanism in part on his repudiation of monarchy. The assertions that these critics make need qualification.

First, it is important to recognise that the reasons Milton expresses for opposing monarchy are often different from those cited by Machiavelli. Milton uses Scripture, for example, to support his assertion that monarchy is a sinful form of government, and he equates a return to monarchy with the loss of religious freedom. Machiavelli and the classical republicans, on the other hand, were not concerned with the moral standing, in Christian terms, of monarchy or any particular form of government, nor did they express particular concern for freedom of religious worship. Milton's Christian beliefs, therefore, account for one of the main reasons why he expresses different reasons for opposing monarchy from those cited by Machiavelli. Milton also accuses monarchy of being excessive, wasteful, and superficial. Machiavelli and the classical republicans, however, do not direct criticism of this sort against monarchy as a form of government. Rather, as Skinner has clearly pointed out, the republican theorists of Renaissance Italy argued that a "hereditary prince . . . will generally seek his own ends rather than the common good, [and] the community will . . . forfeit its liberty" ("The State" 104). Machiavelli, then, criticises monarchy for its general inability to promote the common good, whereas Milton, in addition to expressing similar criticism of monarchy, also presents monarchy as sinful, excessive, wasteful, superficial, and a threat to spiritual liberty. We must therefore recognise that much of the criticism of monarchy that Milton expresses in *The Ready and Easy Way* is different from that of the republican theorists.

Secondly, although throughout most of this pamphlet Milton asserts unqualified criticism of monarchy, though not always for the same reasons as the republicans, his condemnation of this form of government is by no means absolute. For example, one of his

comments strongly suggests that he is certainly not opposed to the monarchy of Christ. He writes that

there can be no cause alleged why peace, justice, plentiful trade, and all prosperity should not thereupon ensue throughout the whole land . . . even to the coming of our true and rightful and only to be expected King, only worthy as he is our only Saviour, the Messiah, the Christ, the only heir of his eternal father, the only by him anointed and ordained since the work of our redemption finished, universal Lord of all mankind. (891-892)

Here Milton argues that only Christ is their rightful king since He is the only one worthy of this position. In contrast to the bulk of his argument in this pamphlet, here Milton clearly expresses an acceptance of monarchy where Christ is king. The argument that Milton asserts here may conform with Lejosne's and Himy's interpretation of Milton's politics in *Paradise Lost*. As I have observed in my introduction, both Lejosne and Himy make the general argument that in *Paradise Lost*, Milton "made monarchy in Heaven justify republicanism on earth" (Lejosne 106). The passage above from *The Ready and Easy Way* could also be interpreted in this way, but Milton is probably referring to Christ's second coming, which means that he is arguing that Christ will actually physically come and rule as king on earth, rather than from Heaven. Thus, this passage demonstrates that in *The Ready and Easy Way*, Milton's criticism of monarchy is not without exception and is not as straightforward as some critics presume.

Elsewhere, however, Milton also suggests that he is not opposed to monarchies in principle, even ones where Christ is not king. For he accepts "that monarchy of itself may be convenient to some nations," and "that there may be such a king who may regard the common good before his own, may have no vicious favourite, may hearken only to the wisest and incorruptest of his parliament" (893). We can conclude here that Milton is not referring to Christ's monarchy, since there is only one Christ and he uses the plural "nations," and because it is unlikely that Milton would believe that Christ would need a

parliament, let alone consult one. So here Milton asserts that monarchy, even without Christ, is not necessarily a bad form of government.

Having identified these ways in which Milton qualifies his repudiation of monarchy, we can interpret his position on monarchy in this pamphlet in two different ways. First, it could be argued that in *The Ready and Easy Way* Milton opposes all monarchies where Christ is not king, and that this is why the bulk of his argument constitutes a critique of monarchy and why he says that only Christ is worthy of being king. This interpretation, however, fails to account for Milton's short admission that monarchy is not necessarily a bad form of government. Thus, the more logical interpretation is that Milton is not against monarchy in principle, but is opposed to England returning to monarchy at this time. This interpretation is supported by textual evidence in *The Ready and Easy Way*. For example, after having admitted that monarchy is not necessarily bad, Milton writes:

To us who have thrown . . . [monarchy] out, [to receive it] back again . . . cannot but prove pernicious. For kings to come, never forgetting their former ejection, will be sure to fortify and arm themselves sufficiently for the future against all attempts hereafter from the people; who should be then so narrowly watched and kept so low that . . . they never shall be able to regain what they now have purchased and may enjoy, or to free themselves from any yoke imposed upon them. (893)

In other words, Milton argues that although monarchy is not necessarily a bad form of government, it is a bad choice of government for England at this time. The English have already thrown out a king who became a tyrant (Charles I); to receive another one back again would be dangerous because a new king would be sure to subdue the people so that his position is kept secure. Hence, Milton believes that if Charles is made king, he will be a tyrant. So although Milton is not against monarchy in principle, in his desperation to stop the tyranny of Charles, he criticises monarchy without qualification throughout much of this pamphlet – as though he is against monarchy in principle – as a rhetorical strategy in order

to help him persuade his readers not to make Charles king of England. Thus, Milton's argument is really designed to repudiate tyranny, not monarchy.

Critics such as Brown, Lejosne, Woolrych, Norbrook, and Skinner, who claim that Milton repudiates monarchy, thus fail to recognise Milton's position in regard to monarchy. The sense in which Milton is a republican in *The Ready and Easy Way*, at least under our definition of republicanism, is qualified because the argument in this pamphlet is designed to repudiate tyranny, not monarchy. Further qualification is also required after recognising that where Milton does criticise monarchy, he often gives reasons for his criticism that differ greatly from those of the republicans. Thus, even if his repudiation of monarchy is absolute, which it clearly is not, the sense in which Milton is a republican in *The Ready and Easy Way* would still need to be qualified by recognising these differences. In many other respects, however, Milton's political thought conforms with republicanism: he asserts that republican government will bring greatness to the people; that republican government will promote liberty; and that citizens will need to serve their state and cultivate certain virtues in order to construct and maintain a republican government. But that Milton conforms in some important ways with republican political thought still leaves open the question of how he is related to liberal political thought.

(iv)

In *The Ready and Easy Way*, Milton argues, like Locke, that all men are born free, for God "didst create mankind free!" (898). Elsewhere in this pamphlet, he argues that implementing a free commonwealth will be easy, and will not require "the introduction of new obsolete forms or terms, or exotic models – ideas that would effect nothing but with a number of new injunctions to manacle the *native liberty of mankind*" (892, emphasis

added). So here Milton's presentation of man is similar to Locke's, in the sense that both assert that man was created free and is naturally free.⁷ Throughout *The Ready and Easy Way*, Milton also asserts that government should protect this natural freedom. For example, he applauds a free commonwealth – whose members he refers to as the "keepers of our liberty" – because of its ability to "preserve us a free people" (887-888). Moreover, he suggests that protecting individual freedom is "one main end of government" (895). Thus, like Locke, Milton asserts that God created humans free, humans are naturally free, and that government should protect this freedom. Milton also suggests that government should base its laws on the laws of nature: "the law of nature . . . is the only law of laws truly and properly to all mankind fundamental, the beginning and the end of all government" (882). Thus, given that he asserts that humans have a God-given natural freedom which government should protect, it is reasonable to conclude that for Milton, as for Locke, one of the laws of nature is that humans remain free. Thus, in the above passages Milton expresses ideas about nature, man, freedom, and the state that are consistent with liberal political thought: he asserts that God created man free and that man is naturally free; he implies that natural law dictates that man be free; and he maintains that government should protect man's freedom.

Milton's defence of religious toleration in *The Ready and Easy Way* is also similar to Locke's in the *Letter*. For Milton, freedom of worship is the "liberty to serve God and to save his own soul according to the best light which God hath planted in him to that purpose" (895). Milton gives a number of reasons why government should protect this freedom and refrain from using force in matters of religion. One reason is "that Christ in his church hath left no vicegerent of his power; but himself, without deputy, as the only head thereof, governing it from heaven. . . . Christ . . . hath not left the least shadow of a

⁷ However, although Locke asserts that "we are born free" ("Two Treatises" 61), unlike Milton, he qualifies this statement by arguing that children are not free until they can learn to reason and understand the laws

command for any such vicegerence from him in the state, as the pope pretends for his in the church" (887). Milton implies that no civil authority has legitimate power over the church because Christ has never delegated this power to anyone. This, we may recall, is one of the reasons for religious toleration given by Locke in the *Letter*. Another reason given by both Locke and Milton is that everyone must interpret God's will for themselves. Milton writes that it is only "by the reading of his revealed will [in the Scriptures] and the guidance of his Holy Spirit" (895) that people are able to serve God and find salvation. Therefore, he argues that there is "no supreme judge or rule in matters of religion but the scriptures – and these to be interpreted by the scriptures themselves, which necessarily infers liberty of conscience" (895). According to Milton, Scripture is the word of God but everyone must interpret the Scriptures, and therefore God's will, for themselves. As Milton points out, the result is that everyone has the freedom to worship God in the way that they have interpreted is best. Like Locke, then, Milton argues that everyone has the freedom to determine God's will for themselves.

Milton also emphasises the importance of freedom of worship. He writes that having this freedom "is best pleasing to God" (895), and he therefore considers this religious freedom to be "the best part of our liberty" (883) and asserts that it "ought to be to all men dearest and most precious" (895). Thus, as I have already observed, one of the prevalent reasons Milton gives for opposing monarchy in this pamphlet is that it represents a loss of religious freedom. He argues that kings are known to be suspicious of those who are reputed to be religious, and that kings "hear the gospel speaking much of liberty – a word which monarchy and her bishops both fear and hate" (896). One of the main reasons Milton gives for establishing a free commonwealth, on the other hand, is that it will protect religious freedom. He writes that "no government [is] more inclinable . . . to protect [this

which apply to them ("Two Treatises" 55-61).

liberty of conscience], than a free commonwealth" (895). Because it is capable of providing this liberty, Milton argues that a free commonwealth is "most cherishing to virtue and to religion, but also (I may say it with greatest probability) plainly commended, or rather enjoyed by our Saviour himself to all Christians" (884). Although Milton differs from Locke in the sense that Locke does not condemn or require a particular form of government, the emphasis that Milton places upon the importance of religious freedom is consistent with Lockean liberalism and contrasts with republicanism. For under republican political theory, freedom of religious worship is not a priority. On the contrary, religion is used as a political tool to make people obey the law and thus become virtuous citizens. For Milton and Locke, however, there is nothing more important than religious freedom, because it is a condition which is necessary for serving God and finding eternal salvation. Milton's priorities, therefore, are those of Lockean liberalism, and they contrast sharply with those asserted in republican political theory.

Like Locke, Milton also argues that if the officials of a government do not protect the people's liberties, then they may be justly resisted with force. Milton best demonstrates his endorsement of this liberal concept in his defence of those who rebelled against, and ultimately executed, Charles I. He writes that "the Parliament of England, assisted by a great number of the people who appeared and stuck to them faithfulest in defence of religion and their civil liberties, judging kingship by long experience a government unnecessary, burdensome, and dangerous, justly and magnanimously abolished it" (881). Here Milton seems to be suggesting that rebellion is justified if the people judge it to be the best course of action. However, after giving this initial justification for rebellion, Milton then defends those who rebelled against Charles on the grounds that Charles violated his agreement with God and the people. Milton argues that Charles was entrusted by God and the people to preserve "the true religion and our liberties" (881). In return, the people of

England covenanted "to preserve the king's person and authority" (881). According to Milton, however, Charles breached this contract by "endeavouring to bring in upon our consciences a popish religion," (881) and by causing the massacre of Englishmen in Ulster by plotting with Irish rebels. Milton argues that by violating the liberties of his subjects, Charles had acted against God's will. Thus, Milton determines that the English people "could not serve two contrary masters, God and the king" (881). Milton suggests here that government represents a trilateral agreement between those who govern, those who are governed, and God. If government violates the liberties of the people, then it also violates God's will and it is just for the people to rebel. Locke on the other hand, asserts that government only represents an agreement between those who govern and those who are governed, and if this agreement is broken by a government which violates the people's rights, then it is dissolved and those who were formally under its governance have the right to rebel. However, we may recall that assertions such as these are qualified, because Locke also asserts that the terms of the agreement between ruler and ruled should be based on, and must not conflict with, natural law, which is the manifestation of God's will. So if government breaks its agreement and violates the people's rights, it also violates natural law and thus God's will. When we take this into account, Locke's justification for rebellion is closer than it may first appear to be to Milton's justification. Although Milton does not refer to natural law or the dissolution of government, his position here is similar to Locke's in that both assert that if government breaches its contract with the people, it also acts against God's will and it is just for the people to rebel.

Like Locke, Milton also expresses a Christian view of history. For instance, Milton argues that if monarchy returns, the English

are never like to attain thus far as we have now advanced to the recovery of our freedom, never to have it in possession as we now have it, never to be vouchsafed hereafter the like mercies and signal assistances from Heaven in our cause, if by our

ungrateful backsliding we make these fruitless; flying now to regal concessions from his divine condescensions and gracious answers to our once importuning prayers against the tyranny which we then groaned under. (884)

Here Milton asserts that the peoples' recent victory against the tyranny of Charles was achieved with God's help, but if they choose to reinstate monarchy then they will again suffer oppression. Moreover, they will never attain the freedom they have now because God will no longer help them. He also argues that England's contemporary situation reflects that of the Israelites before they made the mistake of choosing a king. Milton refers to 1 Samuel 8: 18, "And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day," and then writes, "us if he shall hear now, how much less will he hear when we cried hereafter, who once delivered by him from a king, and not without wondrous acts of his providence, and sensible and unworthy of those high mercies, are returning precipitantly, if he withhold us not, back to the captivity from whence he freed us!" (894). Milton argues that the English were heard by God, who helped them defeat Charles, just as the Israelites were heard by God before they decided they wanted a king. If the English now make the same mistake as the Israelites and decide they too want a king, then they will return to captivity and this time God will not hear their cries for help. If, on the other hand, the English construct a free commonwealth, then "there can be no cause alleged why . . . all prosperity should not thereupon ensue throughout the whole land . . . (if God favour us, and our willful sins provoke him not) even to the coming of a true and rightful and only to be expected King . .

the Messiah, the Christ" (891). Using the Bible as the record of human history, Milton argues here that if the English construct a free commonwealth and God favours them, then they should prosper until Christ's second coming. In the above passages, therefore, Milton expresses a Christian view of history. Historical events with outcomes that Milton favours, such as the defeat and execution of Charles and the construction of an English

commonwealth, are considered to be divinely sanctioned, whereas Milton considers the possible return to monarchical government at this time an insult to God and a violation of His will. Thus, Milton's political thought is the same as Locke's, in the sense that both of them express a linear Christian view of history, where the Bible is considered to be the historical record of human history and God is considered to be the arbitrator of human conflicts.

Like Locke, Milton also asserts that government is only established through the consent of the people. Referring to Aristotle's *Politics*, Milton argues that originally men consented to be governed by a single person of outstanding virtue: "certain men at first, for the matchless excellence of their virtue above others, or some great public benefit, were created kings by the people, in small cities and territories, and in the scarcity of others to be found like them" (893). However, as these political communities grew, "the number of prudent men increased," (893) so that when these kings became tyrants, the people were able to dispose of them and form free commonwealths. Milton then appeals to his readers "to find . . . out and choose" the "worthy men" in "our own nation" with the ability to unite in council and "govern us" (893). Here Milton strongly suggests that government derives its authority from the people. Government is formed only after the people *create* a king or *choose* worthy men to govern. Elsewhere in *The Ready and Easy Way*, Milton refers to the ability to vote for the form of government the political society shall have as a "right" (895), a word that is at the heart of juridical "liberal" discourse. Moreover, he writes that "the ground and basis of every just and free government . . . is a general council of ablest men, *chosen* by the people" (888, emphasis added). Although what Milton means by "the people" in this pamphlet differs from Locke's definition in *Two Treatises of Government* (as I will demonstrate in the following paragraphs of this chapter), in the selected passages above Milton does agree with Locke that government originates in the consent of "the

people." There is, therefore, clear evidence that Milton expresses the liberal political concept in this pamphlet that the consent of "the people" is the foundation of government.

Although both agree that government is established through consent, Milton's criticism of popular government in *The Ready and Easy Way* reveals that in this text he differs from Locke in an important way. In Chapter Two, I observed that Locke argues that once men have consented to form a political society, the will of the majority should determine the will of the whole community, and therefore the majority should decide what form of government shall exist. Although Locke's notion of "the majority" appears to exclude women, his political theory was nonetheless radically democratic for seventeenth-century England. Ashcraft, for example, writes, "the notion that the fate of the country, dependent upon the decision to erect whatever form of government they desired, rested with 'the majority of the community,' not only would have, but as we have seen, *did* terrify people" (*Revolutionary* 583). In March 1660, when the majority were calling for the return of monarchy, this notion would have indeed terrified Milton. Not surprisingly, then, in *The Ready and Easy Way*, Milton is critical of democratic government. He notes that after the Second Civil War, Parliament resumed negotiations with Charles. David Smith explains that "most members of both Houses were unable to contemplate any settlement without the king and hence could see no alternative but to resume talks with him" (160). Milton, however, applauds those in the minority who refused to bargain with Charles, and who were assisted by Colonel Thomas Pride and his soldiers in purging the Parliament of "unfaithful" members. Milton describes the "faithful" members that were left as the "best principled of the people" and writes that they knew "that most voices ought not always to prevail where main matters are in question" (882). Here Milton clearly demonstrates that he does not endorse democracy when its results conflict with what he wants. During his argument for the establishment of a perpetual Senate, Milton anticipates that "it will be

objected that in those places where they had perpetual senates," such as Athens, Sparta, and Rome, "they had also popular remedies against their growing too imperious" (890). In response, Milton argues "that these remedies either little availed the people, or brought them to such a licentious and unbridled democracy as in fine ruined themselves with their own excessive power" (890). Milton explains "that the main reason urged why popular assemblies are to be trusted with the people's liberty, rather than a senate of principal men, [is that] . . . great men will be still endeavouring to enlarge their power, but the common sort will be contented to maintain their own liberty" (890). Here Milton refers to the republican argument that the rich and powerful *grandi* desire "to obtain power and glory for themselves . . . at all costs," whereas the main concern of the ordinary citizen "will usually be no more than to live a life of security" (Skinner, "Negative Liberty" 205). Milton, however, rejects this argument, claiming that it "is by experience found false, none being more immoderate and ambitious to amplify their power than such popularities" (890). So, unlike Locke, Milton, in *The Ready and Easy Way*, is clearly critical of rule dictated by the majority.

In accordance with his criticism of popular government, Milton presents a very narrow definition of "the people" who can legitimately choose the form of England's government at this time. As I have mentioned above, Milton suggests that the people have the right to choose the form of government they want. Milton notes, for instance, that certain men "were created kings by the people," but that "when they abused their power . . . the people, soon disposing of their tyrants, betook them, in all civilest places, to the form of a free commonwealth" (893). Milton acknowledges that in the past the people have chosen monarchy as their government, but that when these kings have become tyrants the people have chosen to form a free commonwealth. This particular result of democracy is endorsed by Milton. However, it becomes clear that in *The Ready and Easy Way* Milton argues that

not all the people should have the right to choose the form of England's government at this time. For example, Milton wants to exclude all those who want Charles restored from having a legitimate vote in the up-coming elections. To do this, he first argues that all those people who in the past were devoted to kingship, having fought for the late King Charles, have lost their right to vote: "this greatest part have both in reason and the trial of just battle lost the right to the election what the government shall be" (895). Here Milton argues that because those who fought for Charles lost on the battlefield, they have also lost the right to vote for the form of government they want. Next, Milton states that "of them who have not lost that right, whether they for kingship be a greater number, who can certainly determine?" (895). He innocently suggests here that he does not know whether or not the majority of those who can legitimately vote (according to his criteria) will want Charles restored. If they do, however, Milton argues that their votes can be dismissed by the minority anyway. He says,

suppose they be [in favour of Restoration], yet of freedom they partake all alike, one main end of government; which if the greater part value not, but will degenerately forego, is it just or reasonable that most voices against the main end of government shall enslave the less number that would be free? More just it is, doubtless, if they come to force, that a less number compel a greater to retain (which can be no wrong to them) their liberty, than that a greater number, for the pleasure of their baseness, compel a less most injuriously to be their fellow slaves. (895)

In other words, Milton claims that votes in favour of a return to monarchy, irrespective of whether or not these votes denote the decision of the majority, represent a desire for the loss of liberty to all. It is unreasonable and unjust, says Milton, to impose such a desire upon those who do not wish to be enslaved, since one of the main ends of government is to guarantee freedom to all. In effect, then, Milton excludes all those who want monarchy restored from deciding on what form of government England should have at this time, and he ultimately restricts his definition of "the people" only to those in the minority who, like

himself, do not want monarchy restored. In other words, Milton's undemocratic political structure means that only those who agree with him will be allowed to vote. Barker writes that "it was government by men so enlightened, not by popular orders, that he desired in 1660" (269). Locke, on the other hand, does not reject any particular form of government, and although he appears to exclude women from his definition of "the majority," he is willing to allow the majority of a political community to decide what form of government shall exist. In this respect, then, Milton's political thought, in *The Ready and Easy Way*, differs from Lockean liberalism.

Having established that "the people" will choose a free commonwealth, since to Milton this is the only legitimate choice, he then places restrictions on the people who can nominate and vote for members of the senate. When Milton says that "the ground and basis of every just and free government . . . is a general council of ablest men, chosen by the people," (888) he does not mean "all the people" but rather "a select group of the people." He argues that to preserve the commonwealth it will be necessary

to well-qualify and refine elections, not committing all to the ways and shouting of a rude multitude, but permitting only those of them who are rightly qualified to nominate as many as they will; and out of that number of a better breeding to choose a less number more judiciously, till after a third or fourth sifting and refining of exactest choice, they only be left chosen who are the due number and seem by most voices the worthiest. (891)

Milton wants to restrict those who can nominate members and then put further restrictions on those who can actually vote to have these members elected into government. Moreover, he says that the way to "qualify" those people who can nominate and vote is by educating them: "To make the people fittest to choose, and then fittest to govern, will be to mend our corrupt and faulty education, [and] to teach the people faith" (891). In other words, only people that agree with his political thinking – or have been taught to agree with his political thinking – are qualified to nominate and vote for the senators who will govern and

represent "the people." Thus, as well as restricting those who can legitimately choose England's form of government, Milton also restricts those who can legitimately choose the composition of England's government. In this sense, then, Milton's political thought again differs from Locke's.

(v)

Having examined both sides of the argument, we are now able to assess and make a final determination on Milton's political thought in *The Ready and Easy Way*. We have seen that Milton's political thought is similar to republican political thought in the following respects: he argues that a republic will create civic greatness; he equates republican government with freedom; he suggests that the citizens need to have certain virtues in order to construct and maintain a republican government; he emphasises the importance of citizens serving their state and implies that civil liberties must be earned; and he contrasts his support of republican government with criticism of monarchy. Many critics rely heavily on this last point as evidence of Milton's republicanism, yet there are important qualifications that must be recognised concerning Milton's criticism of monarchy in this pamphlet. We must recognise, for instance, that Milton's repudiation of monarchy is by no means absolute. At one point he applauds Christ as king and in another place in the text he admits that monarchy, even where Christ is not king, is not necessarily a bad form of government. By acknowledging these inconsistencies, we can conclude that Milton's criticism of monarchy is really designed to repudiate the tyranny of a particular expected monarch at a particular time, rather than monarchy in general. However, even if Milton's criticism of monarchy was absolute, it would still be necessary to recognise the differences between the reasons Milton expresses for opposing monarchy and those expressed by

Machiavelli. For, unlike Machiavelli, Milton cites Scripture to support his repudiation of monarchy and much of his criticism is indicative of his fear of losing freedom of religious worship. In some important respects, then, Milton's political thought is consistent with republican political thought, but in some other respects it is not.

We have also observed that Milton's political thought is similar to liberal political thought in the following respects: he asserts that God created man free and that man is naturally free; he suggests that government should base its laws on the laws of nature; by asserting that government should protect the individual's natural freedom, he implies that natural law dictates that all humans remain free; he defends and emphasises the importance of religious toleration; he argues that if a government does not protect its citizen's liberties, then it may be justly resisted with force; he expresses a Christian view of history; and he asserts that government is only established through the consent of the people. Milton diverges from liberal political thought, however, by criticising rule dictated by the majority and by presenting a very narrow definition of "the people" who can legitimately choose the form and composition of England's government at this time.

If we now review some of the more crucial points of contention between the indicators of republican and liberal political thought that are present in *The Ready and Easy Way*, we will be able to determine which of these political discourses is more prominent in this pamphlet. First, let us review how Milton presents the concept of freedom and its relationship to the individual and the state. He exclaims that God "didst create mankind free" (898), and that his fellow Englishmen must not "manacle the native liberty of mankind" (892). Throughout this pamphlet, he asserts that protecting this God-given natural freedom is "one main end of government" (895). The individual is presented as a bearer of freedom, and the declared purpose of government is to protect this freedom. These concepts are consistent with liberal political thought, but are challenged by the one

line where Milton says that under a free commonwealth civil liberties will only be enjoyed by "every person according to his merit" (896). As I mentioned earlier, here Milton appears to be advocating the republican theory of liberty. Although the meaning of the word "merit" here is by no means certain, it would be reasonable to argue by reason of context that by "merit" Milton is referring to how well a citizen serves the commonwealth. So he seems to be suggesting here that freedom is not a natural quality of man that government must protect, but a condition that must be earned. This republican notion of freedom, however, is outweighed in this pamphlet by the strong textual evidence which supports the assertion humans have a God-given natural freedom that government must protect. We can conclude, therefore, that the liberal conception of freedom is the more prominent in this pamphlet.

Milton's perception of religion and history are other important indicators of whether republican or liberal political thought is more prominent in *The Ready and Easy Way*. The republican's primary concern is to establish civic greatness, which is best achieved by allowing citizens the freedom to pursue their chosen ends. This, in turn, is best achieved under a republic, and a republic must be maintained by virtuous citizens. In republican political theory, the importance of religion is only related to its ability to help enforce the law which in turn helps create virtuous citizens. This perception of religion, as a mere political tool, is never expressed by Milton in *The Ready and Easy Way*. Instead, throughout this pamphlet Milton expresses a liberal perception of religion. Like Locke, he emphasises the importance of a man's freedom to worship God in a manner that he thinks is best, and he considers this religious freedom to be "the best part of our liberty" (883). In accordance with his Protestantism, Milton also expresses a Christian vision of history. Recent historical events that Milton favours, such as the victory over Charles, are considered to be divinely sanctioned, whereas the possible readmission of monarchy at this

time is considered to be a violation of God's will. Moreover, at one point Milton argues that if the English construct a free commonwealth, they will prosper until Christ's second coming. This linear Christian view of history is also expressed by Locke and contrasts with Machiavelli's cyclical view of history. Thus, Milton is more liberal than republican in *The Ready and Easy Way*, in the sense that his perception of religion and history is similar to Locke's and contrasts with Machiavelli's.

In summary, we can conclude that in *The Ready and Easy Way*, Milton in many ways conforms with aspects of both republican and liberal political thought. However, critics are wrong to rely solely on Milton's criticism of monarchy in this pamphlet as evidence of his republicanism, since this criticism is by no means absolute and is designed to prevent Charles from becoming monarch, rather than monarchy in general. Milton is also far from being the perfect example of a liberal in this pamphlet. His criticism of democracy and the restrictions he wants to put on those who can choose the form and composition of the English government clearly contrasts with Lockean liberal political thought. On the more crucial points of contention between liberalism and republicanism, however, Milton sides with liberalism. The liberal notion that the individual has a natural freedom which government must protect, is more prominent than the republican notion that freedom is a privilege that the individual must earn by serving his state. Moreover, Milton's emphasis on the importance of religious toleration and his Christian view of history are also consistent with liberal political thought and contrasts with republican political thought. Overall, then, Milton is more of a liberal than a republican in *The Ready and Easy Way*.

4. CONCLUSION

Many critics regard Milton as a republican, while others consider him a liberal. This is problematic, for prominent political historians argue that republican political thought is distinct from liberal political thought. Skinner, for example, describes how under republican political thought the law is used to coerce citizens into fulfilling their civic duties so that they can remain free, whereas under liberal political thought freedom is considered to be a natural right that government must protect. Pocock argues that under republican political thought the individual is complete only when he participates in politics, but that under liberal political thought the individual is considered to be a bearer of rights which government must protect. Schochet observes that under republican political thought, individual liberties are considered to be privileges that must be created, whereas under liberal political thought, individual liberties are considered to be entitlements that precede organised politics. Given these accounts of liberal and republican political thought, it seemed impossible that Milton could be both a liberal and a republican. In order to determine what he is, I have looked at the ways in which Milton's political thought in *Of Civil Power* and *The Ready and Easy Way* is related to these two traditions of Western political thought.

Liberalism, as it was formulated by Locke, is a political philosophy founded on Christian religious beliefs and a Christian view of history. The Lockean liberal asserts that God has declared his will in the form of natural law, and it is by virtue of this natural law that men in the state of nature have the natural right to live, be free, own assets, and judge and punish transgressors of natural law. However, because of the insecurities and dangers for man in the state of nature, men unite and form government to protect their property, and entrust to government their natural right to judge and punish transgressors of natural law.

In accordance with the belief that all humans have the natural right to be free, the liberal also asserts that government is only established through the consent of the people. Moreover, the liberal asserts that force should not be used in matters of religion, although it is legitimate for anyone to persuade another that his way of worshipping God is best. For the liberal, church and state are separate institutions with distinct functions. The church can legitimately use persuasion, but not force, in order to try to save souls. The state, on the other hand, can legitimately use force (and persuasion) in order to protect individual property rights. According to the liberal, however, if a government fails to protect individual property rights and uses force without lawful authority, then it is dissolved, everyone returns to the state of nature, and a state of war arises in which the people have the right to defend themselves as they see fit and punish their attackers.

In *Of Civil Power*, Milton conforms with this definition of liberalism in a number of ways. Like Locke, he promotes religious toleration and argues that the state should not use its force in matters of religion because, under the gospel, no one can infallibly determine God's will, force is ineffectual at changing belief and establishing faith, and Christ neither wants nor needs force to be used in this way. Like Locke, Milton also asserts that the state can legitimately use force in civil matters, and that although the church must never use force, it can legitimately use persuasion to change belief, establish faith, and increase membership.

However, because, as Walker points out, Locke's theory of religious toleration is limited, I found it necessary to extend further and refine my initial definition of liberalism, so that it is recognised as harbouring a limited theory of religious toleration. In *Of Civil Power*, Milton's theory of religious toleration is also limited. Milton argues, like Locke, that under theocracy, religious persecution is justified. Moreover, he argues that religious practices that conflict with the interests of the state should not be tolerated, and that those

who interpret scripture in a way that is probably wrong should not be tolerated. Thus, the state can, under certain circumstances, repress any religious belief or practice. Milton exploits this qualification in his theory of religious toleration and argues that Catholics should not be tolerated by the state. He argues that they should not be tolerated because they are the subjects of a foreign prince and therefore a threat to the state; they believe that they have infallible knowledge of God's will; and they use force against those who have different religious beliefs and practices. He also suggest that Catholics are idolaters and asserts that idolaters should not be tolerated. Ultimately, then, Milton's theory of religious toleration, like Locke's, only applies to Protestants. This is because the political thought of both Locke and Milton derives from their Protestant religious beliefs. Thus, they can never really separate church and state, and they both end up condoning state persecution of all those who do not conform with their political assertions, or who hold religious beliefs that conflict with their political assertions. Because Milton's political thought in *Of Civil Power* is the same in many important respects as Locke's political thought in the *Letter*, there are strong grounds for thinking of this tract as a liberal tract. There are, however, no grounds for thinking of Milton as a republican in this tract.

By taking the arguments of Machiavelli as their model, Skinner and Pocock provide us with a comprehensive definition of republican political thought. Essentially, the republican asserts that to achieve civic greatness citizens must live a free way of life. A free way of life only occurs in the free state and, according to Skinner, Machiavelli argues that the form that such a state must take is a republic: a government consisting of rulers or magistrates who "must always be elected," "must always remain subject to the laws and institutions of the city which elect them," and "must always act to promote the common good" ("The State" 108). The republican also asserts that a state will only remain free if its citizens cultivate certain virtues, such as courage and prudence, necessary to protect it from

internal and external servitude. Thus, it is in the citizen's best interest to cultivate these virtues because they enable him to protect the freedom of his state, which in turn means that he will be able to enjoy personal freedom. However, the republican also relies upon the law, which ideally should be supported by influences of a religion, to ensure that citizens cultivate the virtues necessary to protect their state and hence their own personal freedom. Pocock argues that Machiavelli subordinates religion to politics, because to Machiavelli religion was considered to be a mere political tool that could be used to instil civic virtue within the people. Moreover, according to Pocock, republicans believed that all political institutions are eventually devoured by corruption and that new institutions are then established and the process continues. Thus, Pocock observes that republicans express a cyclical vision of history.

Milton's political thought in *The Ready and Easy Way* is consistent with republican political thought in the following respects: he argues that a republic will create civic greatness; he equates republican government with freedom; he suggests that citizens need to have certain virtues in order to construct and maintain a republican government; he emphasises the importance of citizens serving their state; he implies that civil liberties must be earned; and he contrasts his support of republican government with criticism of monarchy.

However, there are two important qualifications that must be made to the claim that Milton's criticism of monarchy in *The Ready and Easy Way* is evidence of his republicanism. First, it is important to recognise that the reasons Milton expresses for opposing monarchy are often different from those expressed by Machiavelli and the classical republicans. Milton often uses Scripture to support claims that monarchy is sinful, exploitative, excessive, wasteful, superficial, and a threat to religious freedom. Machiavelli and the classical republicans, on the other hand, never use Scripture to support their claims,

are not concerned with religious freedom, and only oppose monarchy for its general inability to promote the common good. Secondly, Milton's condemnation of monarchy is by no means absolute. At one point in the text, he applauds monarchy where Christ is king. Moreover, elsewhere in the text he indicates that he is not opposed to monarchies in principle, even ones where Christ is not king. It is *not* the case, then, as Woolrych asserts, that in *The Ready and Easy Way* "the condemnation of monarchy is absolute" (216). Nor is it true that in 1659-60, Milton unambiguously renounced monarchy of all kinds ("Milton and Marchamont" 166), as Worden claims. Hollis' assertion that *The Ready and Easy Way* "denounces monarchy in all its forms" (66) is also incorrect, as is Norbrook's claim that "Milton sees kingship as a form of blasphemy" (414). Similarly, Skinner is clearly mistaken when he makes the following generalisation: "Milton eventually came to accept" the view, by the time he wrote *The Ready and Easy Way*, "that a self-governing republic is the only type of regime under which a community can hope to obtain greatness at the same time as guaranteeing its citizens their individual liberty" ("Republican Ideal" 303). Many of these critics like to think of *The Ready and Easy Way* as a clear indication that Milton was by this time a committed republican, in the sense of repudiating monarchy and asserting republican forms of government. They fail to recognise, however, that some of the passages in *The Ready and Easy Way* indicate that Milton is not opposed to monarchies in principle. By acknowledging these passages we can conclude that Milton is only opposed to monarchy in England at this time, because he believes that the expected monarch, Charles, will be a tyrant. So although Milton is not opposed to monarchy in principle, he expresses unqualified criticism of monarchy throughout most of this pamphlet as a rhetorical strategy to help him convince his readers not to make Charles king. His argument is therefore really designed to repudiate tyranny, not monarchy. These findings clearly qualify the sense in which Milton is a republican in *The Ready and Easy Way*.

Milton's political thought in *The Ready and Easy Way* is also consistent with liberal political thought in a number of different ways. In some places in this text, Milton asserts that man was created free, that man is naturally free, and that government should protect man's freedom. Moreover, Milton suggests that government should base its laws on the laws of nature and, given that he asserts that humans have a God-given natural freedom that government should protect, it is reasonable to conclude that for Milton, as for Locke, one of the laws of nature is that humans remain free. Like Locke, Milton also asserts that if government officials violate the people's liberties, they also violate God's will and it is just for the people to rebel against them. Milton's defence of religious toleration and emphasis on the importance of religious freedom are also consistent with Lockean liberalism. For both Locke and Milton, religious freedom is the highest priority, since it is a condition which is necessary for pleasing God and finding eternal salvation. Moreover, Milton expresses a Christian view of history, and he suggests that government is founded on the consent of the people. However, Milton is far from being the perfect liberal in this pamphlet. Unlike Locke, Milton criticises the rule of the majority and presents a very narrow definition of "the people" who can legitimately choose the form and composition of England's government at this time. Put simply, Milton does not endorse democracy when its results conflict with what he wants.

Thus, Milton's political thought in *The Ready and Easy Way* is both consistent and inconsistent in a number of ways with both republican and liberal political thought. But this tract is more liberal than republican because the liberal notion that humans have a God-given natural freedom that government must protect is more prominent in this pamphlet than the republican notion that personal freedom is a privilege that must be earned. Like Locke, Milton also defends religious freedom and emphasises its importance, and he never expresses the republican notion of religion as a mere political tool. Moreover, like Locke,

Milton expresses a Christian vision of history, which contrasts with Machiavelli's cyclical view of history. Overall, then, Milton is more of a liberal than a republican in *The Ready and Easy Way*.

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